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## Select Poems

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**Lisa Bullard** has written ever since she could. She was raised in Montana where she was once bucked off a horse and didn't get back on. She now lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and two children. Before having children, she travelled around the globe on a shoestring, and since children she has found a new appreciation of packing snacks and a change of clothes for all excursions. Besides writing, she enjoys snowboarding, hiking, canoeing, and binge-watching shows while folding tiny items of clothing. She has taught writing courses at colleges and universities in Washington, Montana, and New York.

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## Time

I used to think of time as flowing forward  
relentlessly marching forward  
never to be snatched back  
or bargained back  
even with good deeds or repentance

but in my own mind time travels backwards  
again and again  
to times I crave forgetting  
to people who hurt me  
even to times I feel deep in my DNA  
but cannot place on my tongue

at night especially I fall backwards  
tumbling through time

in the wrong direction  
back through history that is my own and is not  
behind closed eyes and closed doors  
bending the laws  
of time that were laid out  
that say time moves in one predetermined direction: forward

# You've Got to Have a Plan

for when your burned-out flame finds you  
because he thinks the stars you wished on  
together  
the dreams you whispered  
to one another  
meant that you were meant for each other  
forever

he thought the poems he wrote  
would be the only poems  
you would get  
from a lover

you loved him

you've got to know what to do  
if he shows up  
and thinks you owe him

you once nurtured him  
the same way you nurtured  
a new kitten who lost his mother

you've got to know  
how far you would go  
you've got to got to got to  
have a plan  
have a plan  
have a plan

# A Flashback

time clutches me  
with a sudden grip

one second I wait for sleep  
and the very next: **NO!!!**  
but I can't stop the assault  
on my mind as he looms over me again  
and I am powerless again

raped  
again  
terrified paralyzed  
I leave my body again  
and return again

seconds pass trapped in the memory  
but the anger stays raging  
and the shame  
I want so bad to shake

and I lay awake  
feeling betrayed  
by time and my mind

# You, Papa

Standing by the bank of the Birch Creek

I stoop down and

dip my hand into its icy current

and the water moves past me

I can't hold onto it

I think of you, Papa,

I struggle to grasp you

but again you slip away

and I knew you more in my mind

than not, you always left

away to Texas, away to Nevada,

away to Alaska

you look different from every angle

and when you arrive

you slip through my fingers again

and the slap of my expectations

sting

and I try

to please you, to be your girl

and oh how you are proud of me

but you forget birthday after birthday

you miss most of my plays

you aren't there to screen my dates

but you took me fishing

and we laughed together

and you baited my hook and gutted my fish

and fried it on the fire for our dinner  
and I cling to that memory  
rolling it in my hand like a smooth stone  
but then you leave again and again  
you're always leaving  
then you drink too much again  
you come late to my wedding  
and you leave early  
and we don't dance a father/daughter dance  
but you give me a plaque you made  
when you were a little boy  
a homely looking plaque featuring a hand-painted hunting dog  
and I hang it, cherished, on my wall

# I. Papa: “The Awaited Guests Arrive”

*doop-doop-dee-doo*

A little tune for you, dearest dear dear dear  
dear daughter . . .

oh, okay, so I'm a little just a little drunk . . .

hee-hee-hee

but just hang on, sit tight

and CHECK THIS OUT!

Wooo-eeee! Jeff gave me this harmonica

tonight! See! We drank a little whiskey

to celebrate YOU coming for a VISIT!

Oh you know I miss you kids!

*doop-doop-dee-doo*. Ha ha ha.

And here's a little tune to you

my son-in-law, son-in-law

*doop-doop-dee-doo*

Can you tell I just played harmonica

For the first time in my life TONIGHT!

Wooo-eeee! Am I glad you're here.

I LOVE you two! You know that

don't you? Woweee! I love you!

*doop-doop-dee-doo*. Ha ha ha.



## II. Daughter: “Cotton Candy Land: It’s Where We’ve Always Lived”

the words are  
stones in my belly  
stuck in my throat  
sand in a pipe  
and damned if I’m going to let them out now

*I feel like I’m three years old again and I don’t want to be!  
This brings back too many memories. I can’t laugh because it’s not funny to me.  
I love you, Papa, but I can’t be around you when you’re drunk. I’m leaving.*

we don’t do that in our family  
we carefully look away  
we forget what we saw  
when we remember, we pretend  
that we don’t

it’s all cotton candy for us  
everything is okay for us  
sweet soft and fun for us

if we can just stuff enough  
cotton candy in a volcano  
maybe it will turn into a candy land  
if we can just get it right

and damned if we won’t try

and damned if we won't go crazy trying

I tell myself to lighten up

it's *just* a fun time dammit

I can laugh myself back to cotton candy land

“Ha Ha Ha! That’s so funny, Papa! Ha Ha Ha! Wow!

What a *frickin’* musical genius! Ha Ha Ha!”