

Maybe
At
Dawn

Sarah Friedberg

MAYBE AT DAWN

Sarah Friedberg

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Foreword

Sarah Friedberg's previous book, *When Light Touches Sky*, imagines how light's changeability unsettles our capacity to situate ourselves in one dense, immovable place. It questions perspective. It demonstrates that light, notwithstanding its evanescence, is a fourth dimension, equal and opposite to the other three. Light can deprive us of dimensionality that shapes and defines us. *When Light Touches Sky* uses photographs of light's brimming and dimming to explain a poem's passages, allowing us to experience (not just read about) a poem's moods as its light-filled incidents unfold. The effect is ingenious. It weaves together light, darkening, darkness, and language, leaving us to sense that we've lived through what we just read.

Maybe at Dawn also thinks about light, but the mode of the poetry is more personal. Most of the poems elide the refractive circadian rhythms of sun, moon, and stars. Though these rhythms sometimes appear in *Dawn*, they are backdrops. They do not determine our perspective, but just allow us to see the world as dimmer or brighter. In *Dawn*, dawn is more like a marker, a wished-for potential milestone, as in the poem "I'll look out the window and maybe find the sun again":

Oh, this world
doesn't seem
beautiful anymore,
Maybe at dawn the
Birds will return.

Here, dawn doesn't regulate anything. It may have no effect at all. It may come and go, not even marked by the birds' return. Light doesn't jostle with other dimensions, so much as it leaves behind what seems like a pall. here is more room for pain.

In these poems, Sarah reflects on her own pain with extraordinary candor. She reflects on feeling lost, betrayed, minimized. Sometimes, she displaces this pain onto objects, as in “The Doomed Red Balloon” – but it’s still there, lurking, harboring an ability to defeat whomever and whatever it touches:

For the girl's sake, I hope
Heaven takes care of
Her balloon that dreamed
Of flight, I hope the rays of sun
Were what guided the floating
Red ball home
All we do is take, then let go

Maybe this balloon will return. But we know from the title that it won't. It can't. It's imprisoned in the poem and in Sarah's premonition of it's "doom." Sarah leaves us with the feeling that this is all perhaps the girl's fault, since she loosened her grip on the balloon and left it to its fate. Fate doesn't compensate for our laxity or our failures. Notice too how the sun only *might* influence the balloon's trajectory – it's not identified as controlling that trajectory, or even as active in any capacity. It's just there.

These poems are touching, honest portrayals of one young woman's encounter with the anguish of growing up, experiencing love, and feeling the need to interpret what feels unbearable. Her feelings are intense; they're not allowed to scatter prismatically; they're laser-like, focused, and convey a willingness to encounter her own internality. I found them brave.

~Sandra Sherman

Preface

The July sun was loud, leaving the world glaring gold. The tiles on the wall blinded me. My hands felt the hot running water. Its splatter hummed. The air smelled old; it carried summers from when I was small. Nostalgia pricked my heart, making me yearn for my past. It brought with it that old bitter stench.

I looked to the left, where the grand, cracked, window was. My fingers moved towards its rusted latch, straining against my strength. It groaned. I looked toward my backyard: sharp green, with yellow dew.

It was the wake of dusk. The birds were supposed to be singing goodnight, but they weren't. I looked out into the silence. Then, I saw a tiny brown bird, who opened its mouth and sang. It was glorious. Then nothing. No response. The bird retreated into silence.

If I were still a child, I'd call back, whistle a tune. But I'm not anymore. I stayed silent like the sky and the other birds, who didn't care. I looked to the bird again with recognition: I felt its loneliness.

I turned off the water, closed the window, and my heart flew towards the bird. But I walked away; guilt tugged at me. Maybe at dawn, I'll look out the window again and find courage to sing back to the lonely creature. Maybe, my silence will cease.

This encounter inspired my first-ever poem, "When the Bird sings," which describes what feels like my loneliness. This moment also inspired the title of this book, "Maybe At Dawn." My poetry represents how I felt at a darker point in my life. "Maybe At Dawn" represents the hope of one day waking and not feeling what these poems are about. One day the birds will return, they'll sing and I'll sing with them.

Melancholy

I'll look out the window and maybe feel the sun
again

At dusk, rays peak
through swaying timber,
sweet little birds give song
to the brief gold.

Then it gets real quiet, I call
to the blackening sky;
No one answers, and
it's devastating.
This looming bitterness frightens me,
it leaves a dull stench in the air. Cold
despair sinks the shimmer of moon.

I yearn for the old sun
to come back and hold me
like it once did.

Wind howls like bleak fear,
it yanks at my heart, like I'm
mourning something.

For a moment
it feels soft; then I see the leaves
shiver in anguish.

Oh, this world
doesn't seem
beautiful anymore,

Maybe at dawn the
Birds will return.

Growing Pain

I feel the changes,

Metamorphosis.

Growing's supposed to be

Beautiful, yet

All I see is tragic.

I feel

Myself descending.

I feel every piece of my skin

Has been tampered with,

Because of this ageing.

I fear,

Because I am not

Who I used to be. So

Goodbye pretty

Little girl

I once was.

Memory Lane

Mother

It's cold here

Walk me back

To my childhood

Down the gravel path

Of the memories

That slid from

My grasp, and please

Hold me there

Forever.

Wishing Magic

Dream
On a star,
My mother
Whispered to me
As she tucked me in.
So I closed
My eyes and
Wished on
The brightest one,
And smiled with
Hope because
I believed in
Those magic
Balls of fire.

But, she didn't
Tell me
Nothing burns forever

Sweet Dreams

My joy,

Happiness.

My lost love,

Farewell.

I hope you

Finally

Get some sleep.

Non-Special

I'd let the sun burn
holes in me,
scorch my
skin, leave a rotten smell.

I'd rather
it hurt me.

*I'd let you
hurt me*

Just choose me.

Gone Like Time

You may see me
But now I'm hollow
Like the dolls
You're bored of.
We grew *up*, but
You outgrew *me*.

Just Gone

Oh, little girl

I don't know you anymore:

Edges of who I used to be, please

Hold me.

My lovely old, come back

And *hold me*.

Where's My Beautiful Sun?

They say
We can't bloom year long,
Because eventually
Death's gale carves
It's ragged teeth
Into the sun –
Who's now frail
Like cursed leaves
Which merge into
Rock and forgotten
Bones we once
Loved.

They say
Nature's not meant
To bloom eternally,
That life must leave
For a while, so
The greedy and naive
Can understand
A type of loss
They can't control.

I heard
It's okay, because
The green will
Burn away the horror
Mother paints

With a gangrene
White.

Oh
But for me,
I'm chained to
An eternal winter
Where we only relapse,
I'm cursed to
Watch everything
Become pretty but me
Because the green
Eludes me,
I frightened her
When she saw my
Flesh burnt
From Ice's kiss.

Oh,
You see?
I'm stuck in
Cold death,
Forever
Waiting
For the sun
To save me.

Don't see me as I do

While I rot
I whisper.

My dear Earth
And Sun, oh please
Let the flowers grow
Till their roots
Meld with my flesh.

Let them mourn me
With beauty,
So I'm more than
A pile of
Dirty bones.

Circle Rainbow

The Sky is beautiful today,
The brightest blue
And clear.

The Sky was beautiful today,
Until the clouds came
Blocking the light, stealing its color.

The Sky was beautiful today,
But now it's gray and no one
Cares for it anymore.
The Sky isn't pretty anymore,
So no one stares.

Now it cries releasing the sadness
It's built of.

Oh,
The Sky is beautiful again,
As a spectrum of color fills
Its dark voids.

The Sky is beautiful again,
So people stare and point in awe
Standing in the pools of pain
That caused the beauty
They were enticed by.

Pain is ready to rise again,
The cycle of the Sky,
The uncontrollable cycle
Of colors and light,
How *beautiful*
How *devastating*
There is no end.

The Doomed Red Balloon

When I saw the balloon
It shined, as the dark puffs
Swallowed light heaven pushed
Upon this deviled world where
All we do is let go

I saw the girl who watched her
Precious circle fly away, and
Like human who could do
Nothing about it she saw

As it flew higher then higher
Until finally, it disappeared into
Sky from the ground of the
Greedy and naive

For the girl's sake, I hope
Heaven takes care of
Her ballon that dreamed
Of flight, I hope the rays of sun
Were what guided the floating
Red ball home

All we do is take, then let go

A Beautiful Tragedy

I think the sky is
Painted with scars from the sun,
The colors we see in streaks
Is the blood that falls
From cuts inflicted by the ball of fire.

The colors seep so gracefully,
Taunting our eyes.
Colored pain,
We call it lovely.
Beauty and pain.

“I Love Unicorns”

The sounds of childhood
Held together
By the creak and sway
Of magic that
Lets you fly,
Lets you believe again
In unicorns you
Once loved.

I taste the drip of sweets
On my tongue,
It feels like home
And laughter
That comes from
The children, who make
Up what we were
And long
To be.

Ring,
The sound of the bell
And there they
go,
There goes that laughter.

Goodbye unicorn
I'll miss you but remember.

“Keep having adventures
And believe,” is what I wish
I whispered as they left—
To the seesaw
With a smile,

“I love unicorns” she told me
I won't disappoint you yet
I'll believe for you
So “I love unicorns,” I told her

Oh, but that's a lie
I did believe when
The world was sweet
I did,
Then the bell rang.

My Beautiful Summer

In summer, I flew
With the warm breeze
My hair in the air.
Lying in the soft grass, I looked
To the sky, and felt
The breeze that flew
Because it's free.
But then, wind got old
And stiffened,
Throwing me up
Up in the sky.

Then, we danced.
As I twirled,
I swayed with the wind
That graced my fingers, then
Pricked me – my soul, I think.
I was thrown in the air
For the wind to catch.

I felt everything still.

The silence of foretold death:
Goodbye the birds
Whose song I'll miss
Goodbye the leaves
That then will leave, oh
Flowers too are done,
Turning dark, disappearing

Like sun whose shine is dimmed.
I don't feel,
Warmth is foreign here.

So, frozen as the ground
We're promised to, I fell
And fell
Into wet decaying life
Where I cried
As the wind silenced me.

Unknown

A pit in your stomach
On Sundays
Makes you sag
And drags you
Down, into earth
Where life forms,
Questions quarrel
Into ideas,
What is what isn't
That is not known
That is what
Eats, leaves you
Then with a
Hole.

When the Bird Sings

Sometimes,
I call out to sky. To
Nothing at all: silent darkness.

And always hope
For response.
It won't come.

In and Out

Breathe

Like the astronauts

In space who

Find a way.

Death's Course

...Which looks like birds
Who cry to fill their bellies.
Help, they plead, beaks begging,
The rain muffles warmth
From the sun.
Along with clouds angry and grey.

Silence.
They're creatures cursed
To an eternal cycle.

Floating,
Forced into quarrel
By the air that guides.

Whoosh, they go.

Now, the mother was soaring
In her final moments.
The beams of light
Fought the dark.
Sun made her warm
As she fell from the sky.

Frail birds, poor babies
Waiting for mother.
She won't return.

Fire struck in beautiful blue.

Light was what the little ones saw
Tricking their eyes.

Water hid their innocence
From the numb flightless
Figure hitting the trees.

Mercy, I ask you,
She yells into
Eternal quiet.

The birds wait
Skin cold.
The sun burns.

*Mercy, I beg you,
She calls again.
Silenced by night.*

Balance: Peace and War

Hello little life,
A pain like lowering sky,
Look stars! There's no moon to kiss.

Hello little birds, your home was stolen.
Oh, can't you fly?
Your wings were clipped,
See, my wings were too.

Your sky bled
A pretty blaze, it was our muse.
Oh look, we burn so easily too,
Like the trees!

Hello, trees,
We thank you so
And take and take and
Then some more.
Sorry about the leaves,
See our greed?

Oh bird, don't
Cry.
Tears are not diamonds
That cure the pain.

Tide cools sand
Helpless from selfish sun.

Oh screw you,
Giver of burning,
Where life you nourish
Dies so slowly.

Hello universe, go on,
Make snow. Yes,
Cover this place of rock
With what's pretty, oh yes!
Let's live in pretense.
So real it feels.

Snow,
Will it cleanse?
Oh universe,
This is your fault.

Nature and man,
We battle.

My feet they're cold,
Bird, your home is
Cruel.

Far Away

Oh happiness,
give Moon a bluebird.
So it's less alone and
cold.

Poor Moon,
forever forced
from the world.

Happy will return

The mourning sun
Peaks through
Swaying timber
That hides her grave.
Sweet little birds give song
To the gold that passed
And graced and left
Humanity yearning
For its warmth
Again.
Come back light
I cannot see in
This dark

Fallen Love

The Weeping Willow

The sound of the trees
As the breeze flew
I knew you were gone.

But the leaves,
Kept singing
With the crying birds
Left cold,
Like stone buried
By dead earth.

Waltzes with
Bones and anguish.
Full of words
Forever choked.

Skeleton

I am haunted by
your memory;
it's chained me.

You're suffocating me,
Now I'm bitter.

But *I know*:

I'd let you carve holes
In me if you wanted
To feel my bones.

“You know me?”

You said,
My face was
Beautiful, and
I believed you.
Because I
Thought you
Were talking
About *me*.

But,
I watched
Your gaze pass down,
Up then down
But
Never *in*.

You said I was pretty,
Only knowing me with
Your gaze.

Oh,
You only ate
With your
Eyes.
Such pretty eyes.

Forever, You Said

You carved
My skin, so you
Could touch my bones.
Even when you left, I
Felt you in the layers of me.
I can't gut you out

When Light Touches Sky

Here winter's whisper doesn't reach
Rays of glory protect this peace
Oh, lustrous sun
The siren of light who sings
Makes me follow
Even For a glimpse – I wait
Lured by the song
That carved me in your burning sand
From notes that make me mourn
My aching bones you dried
Oh, you sing again in beautiful blue
A metamorphic melody whose voice
I feel in dusk's breeze
The haze of that kiss
You graced me through the day
I know in my soul
I'd follow you, though you burn me
Like the stars you hide in moonlight

Winter's Curse

You, a part of me
Like snow on Earth when
It's too warm.

Eventually, the world
Became bitter and scolding.
Water returned
To sky.

That is the type of love
I didn't know bonded
To me.
I thought,
We'd be frozen together
Forever.
I thought
It'd be cold forever.

Our Before Was Beautiful

We were
running together in
sun that filled my soul.

I'm sorry that warm feeling
Sank
Out of me, like life in winter.

Now we run with a split
Sun, that graces you but leaves
me cold.

Know,
I still feel the sun
From our before. But
My light isn't as bright as
You deserve — I think
It's going away like summer did.

I think I'll be going
Away soon.

Full

Love is
bitter on my tongue
but at least
I'm not starving,
anymore.

Love it
sits right on my tongue
what are words,
anymore.

I can't talk
Anymore,

I'm not starving.

Oh,
Love he
said it's just for
me, that we are
complete.

Oh,
Love he
just pulled on
my skirt, then
he silenced me.

I can't talk
Anymore.

But,
I'm not starving
Anymore.

Dancing Fate

Likes souls
dancing
in wind,
we'll eventually
be carried
from each
other's grasp.

Our fate twisted,
made us fly
apart.

We kissed the
trees as we
faced goodbye.

Why couldn't you?

In the name of our
Broken love, you
Refused to accept
I let you go.
Refused to be more hurt
Than me, so
You plunged a more lethal
Pain towards my heart.

I understand your rage.

You refused
To hear me explain
But *I* understand.

Why
couldn't
you

Bound

Your once-beautiful
Heart tricked me,
So I hope you rot.

You scarred me.
Yet I still breathe.

Please burn shut
The wounds
You made.

You bound me
To your heart.
I want to be free.

Safe Prison

I was held hostage
to your love
because it was
familiar. Sometimes
it felt so safe
I didn't mind
watching myself
contort into
something
I never wanted
to be.

My Moon

I was chained
By my tears. Then
The sun burnt me.
And then it was
Dusk.

I saw the Moon
With craters
Just like me.

It made me feel
Down to my bones.

Made me see
The sky with
A star.

Made me say,
I am the star.

Haunting Whispers

When I said goodbye
I didn't know I would
Part with your
Kindness. Oh,
Then your heart
Shoved me away.

All I have left are the painful
Whispers of my name.

Do you regret when they escape from you?

Guilty Lungs

I can't let myself
Show you my
honesty,
Though you
Bare yours to me.

Because I am
Selfish, and want
To preserve
Our fallen stars.

I can't let
myself leave you,
But I can't
seem to breathe
Anymore.

Baccarat Rouge

I'm over him

Is what I say, so

I don't know why

My fingers

Hover over my favorite

Perfume,

The one he hated,

But I never reach

To put it on.

Your Watering Can

Your water
Touches my leaves,
I feel it drip
Past my broken stem,
Resting in the soil.

Then I feel the sun
Dry me out.

I see you
With your can.
You water me again
Because you think
That helps.

Your love
Is watering me,
But loving me
Is like drenching a
Dead flower.

I'll only rot
It's no use.

I run like a girl

I run like wind,
Carrying me
Through mountains,
Trees and leaves
Scar my face.

I run because of you.

As I follow you
In the haze
Of light,
Our eyes meet.
You smile, I see a
Joy on you. *It's
Beautiful.*

Your eyes watch me.

*You like me
because I'll always
endure the wind.*

Cruel Melody

I see you fall into
Her music, now I'm
Your background melody,
The one nobody hears.

My purpose is
To blend.

It seems you've
Forgotten me.
Memories of what we
Were.

And now it seems
I miss you more
Than you
Remember me.

Almost

I can almost see you,
I can almost see the Sun.

I can almost feel you,
I can almost feel your light.

But, when will I see you?
I whisper to leaves.
Cause, I don't like
darkness.
It whispers to me.

Will you heal me,
with warmth and the breeze?
Will I see you,
outside of my dreams?

I can only see your absence.
It feels like death.

The Misunderstood Star

I was the dying
Shooting star
You wished on,
Because I sparkled
For a moment.

You *thought*
I'd shine, eternally
Bound to you.

When I faded,
You were simply
Naive, victim
Of *your* own
Dreams.

Oh,
I'm sorry
You didn't know.
We glow before we cease.

Reality

I wish love
Was as perfect
As I thought
It would be.

But that is only
A hopeless wish.

But I Can Breathe Again

I'm sorry,
I had to go.

I couldn't breathe
With your love
So close to me.

It pressed on my lungs.

Insomnia

I can't sleep
Because my
Mind is
Full of *us*.

I remember
What I did
To *you*.
I remember what you did to me.

Eternal

I wish I could have
Locked our love
In eternity.
Maybe then,
It could have
Held our love
In it's palms.
Kept it alive,
Like humans
Do with heat
When it's
Cold.

Look at the mirror

You deserve
better, and I hope
one day you can
look at yourself
and believe that.

*Maybe one day
I'll look at myself
And believe...*

We the Flowers

Colors you showed.
Like flowers in June
You made things bloom.
You left.
Colors were grey.
The flowers were dead.
Why didn't you stay?

They weep in the sun
That never feels warm.
They cry to the sky
Filled with storms.
They pray to you,
Who made them so.
They pray for your
Beauty.

Black and white, that's what we saw.
Now we flowers cry in awe.
Your fire,
we got too close.
Then you burnt us.
Pretty flowers we once were.

MAYBE AT DAWN

Maybe At Dawn is Sarah Friedberg's first poetry collection. The poems first came to her sporadically. Eventually, they helped her to understand her feelings. Within a year, she had a collection, representing her vulnerability and, finally, her acceptance that life and love can be painful.

Sarah Friedberg is a student at the Portledge School in Locust Valley, NY. Her previous books include *When Light Touches Sky*, *Waiting for Dunno*, and *The Girl Who Wished Through the Mirror*. She studied creative writing at Dartmouth and acting at Stagedoor Manor in Loch Sheldrake, NY.

SARAH FRIEDBERG

