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## Poems from Means of Leaving

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**from MEANS OF LEAVING**

**ROPE**

I am led like a dog to the slaughter. I cut the cord to my past. I have this terrible fear of dogs. When I was a child I once had two. One was Boots, black and brown, white feet. My father put him in a box-car going west. Then that big brown ugly dog out of nowhere, the hills I think. He stayed a week or so and after I'd gotten used to him he left. Later I found my father had led him out and shot him. I have a picture somewhere of me with my arms around that beast. I can hardly believe I could have loved him.

**POISON**

My cup runneth over was one of her favorite expressions. She said she liked the New World Symphony because it took her away. Late at night the radio was a comfort when he was out drinking. I heard it play that night, I'd recognize anywhere those false notes of promise. He didn't come home, and in the morning she drank that jar of turpentine like it was water, and this is the last time I'll listen to the New World.

## KNIFE

If thy life offend thee, cut it out. Start with the eyes; get acquainted with darkness. Then off with your vain nose which has never led you anywhere but here; next the tongue, that useless cry for understanding. Ears, so you shall know silence at last and know it. Finally your hands that have never reached far enough to grasp in their fleshless fingers that elusive dove that flies between the white clouds in my blue breast.

## WATER

Water and wine. My blood is made in rivers running this very moment through your veins. Lakes fill, oceans have been giving and receiving for as long as I can remember. I have been through forty days and forty nights of rain and this is the forty-first. So this is what it means to continue! To go on, forever, like a river pausing for a moment in its current to hear on the shores that old chant we have been singing now for years: Come home, come home, come home. Suddenly, a rainbow. Suddenly, the rain.