A ny kind of wind in a hedge reminds me of the dancers I saw in London at a small theater next to the Opera House. They wore leotards that matched their skin. Also the raven, way off to the east, and pigeons. The oil-colored throats. The urban wilderness.

There is a street artist named ROA who painted three enormous sea lions on a wall on Bartlett Street in San Francisco, and a family of opossums at Fifteenth and Valencia.

Every other weekend, I ride my bike north for an hour in order to admire the fields of brussels sprouts along the coast.

I have a friend whose husband does embroidery. He taught me that there is such thing as a “widow’s sampler”—traditionally made by the grieving woman in honor of her husband lost at sea. I might like to learn embroidery myself someday.

I see the white emptiness at the center of the painting and cloud shapes in every muted color. A true anthem where the sun is a hole. Wagon wheels and gold coins, they burn us equally. I understand this now. It is the canal and the gate, it is the girl next door whose parents were divorced and whose father lived in a faraway place called Sunnyvale. She was very thin. She wore blue Dr. Scholl’s sandals and big dangly earrings that looked like peacock feathers. I wanted her friendship. After school the boys swept down the long hill on their skateboards, which made a gorgeous whooshing sound. We watched from the manicured lawn, giggling. Sometimes one of them would ride the skateboard in a handstand. Bees in the thickets, their yellow legs.

There was a boy named Bret who visited me while I was babysitting and showed me the glossy photographs, the women tied up and pleading. I can see Bret now; he looks like a fat lazy slob in his profile picture.

There were blackberries at the yard’s edge, and a white trellis rose. At the corner store, a girl named Lalina, the hot dogs turning, cigarettes. Behind the Quik Stop, we hurled glass bottles into the ravine. At the intersection of Lake Otis and Tudor, we gestured for the truck drivers to sound their horns and they did. At Goose Lake, we sprinted across the sand into the water and did the American crawl out to the floating dock. The surface of the dock was gray and cement-like, very gritty. Sometimes, we floated around on the cold water in large black inner tubes and got bitten by mosquitoes.
The more little mummy on the world. A statue of the Pípila, hero of the Mexican War of Independence, standing over the valley with a torch.

I have a friend who can make lavender crème brûlée, venison roast with a blueberry glaze, smoked sockeye.

I wake up, I often feel exhausted. I want to go back to sleep, but I don’t.

I wonder about the beautiful tapteisries in Peri’s coffee shops. They are embroidered with metallic thread, but who performed this handiwork? How long did it take them, and was it difficult for them to part with the finished piece?

My husband chews with his mouth open and drinks directly from the milk carton.

Last night I had a dream in which a famous poet asked me what I’ve been working on these days and I answered, “An exploration of trauma, you know, the gift that keeps on giving.” In the dream, she stopped her work at the granite statue she was chiseling and looked at me hard. Then she said, “All righty then,” and smiled knowingly.

I am a fan of public transportation and the concerto grosso for string orchestra composed by Christopher Cerone entitled “High Windows,” which is based on the Roethke poem of the same name. When I first heard it, I felt as though I’d been peeled. I sat in my seat in the theater, breathing in and out slowly, aware of my new skin.

I have a friend who purchased the old senior center van to Potrero Hill to get some rocks, my husband had folded up a dollar bill to look like a twenty. This is called “puling a gaggle.” The man on the corner unfolded the dollar and saw the trick and came in through the back door of the van. He cut up Hambrone’s forearm with a razor blade and stabbed my husband in the right thigh with a switchblade. My husband spent three days in San Francisco General Hospital.

I do not feel a sense of pride or accomplishment when I think about my two college degrees. I don’t know why this is.

On a good day, I wake up in time to make myself a bowl of McCann’s steel-cut oatmeal sweetened with my homemade blackberry jelly.

I have a cat named Jeffrey who brought me a dead sharp-shinned hawk. I grew up with a dog named Kenai, one time she ate a leech that had been fastened onto her belly for a while.

I distinctly remember visiting Portage Glacier when I was a child and being in awe of the blue-green color of the ice and the feeling of the cold air against my face.

My parents encountered a wolverine while hiking in the Yukon. It ran away.

Sometimes I take BART from Colma to Sixteenth and Mission and walk around by myself for a while. Then I take BART back to Colma and drive home.

When I tried to make a huckleberry pie, the berries looked like salmon eggs and it was too sweet and the crust was too soggy.

I have a friend who built a hot tub out of a fols tote and a Snorkel stove. After a good soak, he dives into the ocean at the end of the dock and swims through the bioluminescence.

When I was in fifth grade, my friend and I smoked
Marlboro Reds while walking down Cache Street to gymnastics. Her older brother had gotten them out of a vending machine at Robert Service High School.

When I did the Walk for Hope in Anchorage in 1975, the music on the radio was “Run Joey Run” by David Geddes and “My Love Is Alive” by Gary Wright and “Radar Love” by Golden Earring and “Billy, Don’t Be A Hero” by Bo Donaldson and the Heywoods.

My husband’s father died when my husband was four years old. His oil painting, Manscape, won a significant award from the New York Museum of Modern Art and toured the United States in the early sixties with an exhibition called Figure Studies. Frank O’Hara was one of the judges. Manscape now hangs in my living room so that every day I look at a painting and think about the father-in-law I never knew and about Frank O’Hara. Manscape is mostly black, with a thick blue line for the sky.

Both of my daughters’ eyes are dark blue, like mine. When I was nine I saw a giant green anemone in a tide pool and I named her Charlotte. I visited Charlotte on a daily basis and caught bullheads for her with my hands.

“Here you go, Charlotte,” I said. “It’s lunchtime... eat up.” I watched the soft tentacles close.

One time, I did allow her to take the ashes to school for years old. His oil painting, Manscape, won a significant award from the New York Museum of Modern Art and toured the United States in the early sixties with an exhibition called Figure Studies. Frank O’Hara was one of the judges. Manscape now hangs in my living room so that every day I look at a painting and think about the father-in-law I never knew and about Frank O’Hara. Manscape is mostly black, with a thick blue line for the sky.

I often feel hopeful that eating flaxseed meal will in...
I know a woman who, in her forties, was engaged to marry an attorney she had met through eHarmony. After a year of dating, courtship, wedding plans, etc., he suddenly went crazy and beat her from head to toe. He even broke her collarbone. I have learned that this does happen to women, without warning. There exists a type of batterer called a cobra.

I always notice it in the spring when a crocus pokes up through the soil. The diamond fell out of my wedding ring about four years ago and, although I found it on the floor and put it in a Ziploc, I still have not taken it to the jeweler to be fixed. During spring breakup in Anchorage, I stopped into a snowbank and my right boot filled with icy water. The sensation was amazing.

I am afraid of people who are introverted; I have an abnormally strong reaction, which includes an increased heart rate and sweaty palms.

I have a friend who claims that he hasn't had sex in so long, his pubes are full of cobwebs. Two of my former students have died from methamphetamine addiction. One of my former students died when he put a chain around his neck and hopped onto his three-wheeler to go pull a friend's three-wheeler out of the ditch. Once, on a field trip, we came upon a salmon carcass full of maggots on the shore.

I have a friend who calls himself a tapestry artist. He lives in Anchorage with a friend of mine from childhood in the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in Sitka, Alaska. The band went to Alaska when they were in high school and met. The whole country was alive.

I can drive a forklift and a skiff with an outboard motor and a large U-Haul van. I don't particularly enjoy riding a bicycle, although I know it's good for my health, and I cannot drive a forklift, nor do I want to.

When anxious, I close my eyes and call up the image of a shimmering green lake.

Goat eyes creep me out and cat eyes do not.

I have heard an elk bugling in the Rockies. When I was twelve, I lay on a frozen lake in the Mata-muka Valley with my brothers and watched the aurora borealis. The ice boomed and cracked underneath us and the world was alive.

I believe in Sasquatch.

I own every size of crochet hook and knitting needle, and an "Eskimo thimble," which is a small piece of seal skin that fits over my index finger. I have seven tattoos on my body and I believe every one of them will look beautiful when I am old.

My godmother gave me a pottery vase that she bought in Tehran in 1977; it is one of my most valued possessions.

When I got married, we hosted a square dance at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in Sitka, Alaska. The band was called Fishing for Cats. My husband and I rode from...
the Presbyterian Church to the reception in a bicycle-drawn carriage behind Kermit, the local Deadhead. He wore a top hat and tails and took us around the Russian Orthodox Church of the Archangel Michael. I wore a top hat and tails and took us around the Russian Orthodox Church of the Archangel Michael. I

Once I walked off the elevator at the Space Needle in Seattle and saw a woman, Ellen, whom I’d met the year before while traveling in Indonesia. When I called her name and she looked at me, I realized she wasn’t the woman I’d met in Indonesia after all. Her name, however, was Ellen. There is a flower called the amaranth, which is imaginary and never dies. ‘The name comes from the Greek word amanton, meaning “unwilting” (from the verb maranio, “to leaving”),’ in the fourth book of Endymion (1868), John Keats wrote.

The spirit calls Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.

The Swedish metal band Amaranthe takes its name from the flower. I call this piece of writing “Amaranth” because of my friend the painter Scott Hewicker and his favorite photograph, I am wearing jeans, a blue sweatshirt, and a top hat, and he is standing next to me. I call this piece of writing “Amaranth” because of my friend the painter Scott Hewicker and his favorite photograph, I am wearing jeans, a blue sweatshirt, and a top hat, and he is standing next to me.

One Sunday afternoon, many years ago, I picked a fight with my husband about his tone—I didn’t like the way he was interrogating me about my spending habits. After about twenty minutes, I decided to take a break and go into town for some chicken soup at New Leaf Market. Driving home on Highway 1, I ran over a cat. When I turned the car around to see if it was okay, I saw it get hit again. It was black and white, very fluffy. The stain was on the road for a long time.

No movie has made me cry more than Il Postino, about Neruda’s time on the coast of Italy. My husband cried openly during Saving Private Ryan and Bridge to Terabithia and Michelle Obama’s speech at the 2016 DNC Convention.

When I was twenty-four, a friend and I took a black Glad garbage bag to a rocky beach along Sitka Sound, poked several holes in it, and gathered dozens of smelt. We rinsed the fish in my kitchen sink, then dipped them in egg white and seasoned flour and cornmeal and fried them in Crisco. A storm that lasted for a week was moving in off the Gulf and my friend told me stories of his grandfather in Kentucky, how he learned to tie a silver darter and a gray ghost and cast them into the Ohio River. It was fall, it was almost the end of the black cod season, it was long before I knew about such things as the Folsom Street Fair or dungeons or twinks or the fucking machine or Kink and Fetish Porn for the Adventurous. I hadn’t even been pregnant yet or contracted a venereal disease. I had just rented my first apartment behind the Forest Services building at 729½ Sitnaka Way, and the only furniture I owned was a futon. I didn’t have a single tattoo. Jerry Garcia was singing: “Maybe the sun is shining, / birds are winging”—” My friend and I popped open a jar of mild Pace salsa, then sat side by side on the kitchen counter and ate the smelt whole.

Caroline Goodwin moved to the San Francisco Bay Area from Sitka, Alaska, in 1999 to attend Stanford as a Wallace Stegner Fellow in poetry. Her books are Text Me, Ishmael (2012), Trapline (2013), Peregrine (2015), and The Paper Tree, forthcoming from Big Yes Press. She lives on the San Mateo coast with her two daughters and teaches at California College of the Arts and the Stanford Writer’s Studio.