

## 1945

It took me a long time to figure out  
what had happened

It was before I was born  
but I was alive . . . 105 days waiting to be born

*look at the international dateline*  
*west to east      Tuesday becomes Monday*

. . . Syracuse . . . New York  
Summer . . . 1945

. . . and a memory that haunted me for years  
about a moment in that day or night  
and what happened on a carrier out in the Pacific

I didn't understand it . . . *but it happened to me too*

Made up from stories I'd heard  
or real

*a flash of experience                      from him to me*  
either way

I remembered

*the instant of the wound*  
*that death                      that took all night*  
*dragged on                      then ended*  
*my uncle's life*

. . . my grandmother said she woke up  
with a splitting headache that lasted all night  
. . . when the headache went away  
she knew her son was dead

. . . my father, the older brother,  
thought

*"It should have been me."*

Maybe I absorbed that too.

I was born on a Monday at the end of October

*West to East . . . Tuesday becomes Monday*

One summer night when I was 19, I woke with a vision  
And, after that, I began to believe

*"This is my last year."*

Odd thoughts for a young man

*"Why am I alive?" "I'm supposed to be dead."*  
*"Why?" . . . "This year, then, will be the year I die."*

Ignored; forgotten . . . felt

Deep inside me . . . year after year

When I first remembered what had happened  
it was a memory of something that had actually happened  
to me

*whirling blades,  
closer and closer; hitting, cutting*

It was real and it happened again

*I screamed and screamed*

Elinor was there                      we'd pulled out two other  
buried, frozen memories

                    I'd learned the mistakes a child's mind can make  
and lock inside                      real facts, re-felt

                    understood differently  
no longer hopeless    brought out  
                    forgiven

                    seen                      accepted  
put back in a different way                      healing

But this, the most terrible memory, remained a mystery  
What had happened?                      What did it mean?

Much later . . . it seemed to finally come together  
A question from me

*"Where did that memory about the cutting blades come from?"*

Some odd rituals . . . a trance . . . a possibility  
A call and a revelation.

When I heard the date of his death  
I felt like I knew what had happened

I thought

*"The memory was real."*

*"Somehow . . . for some reason*

*as he received                      the wound that killed him  
he reached out                      and found me in the womb."*

West to east  
Somewhere inside I stopped believing

*"You're not supposed to be alive."*

Somewhere inside, I started breathing

Now, even later . . . Monday October 18

*Tuesday October 19 out there*

and . . . *I don't know*

But however it happened

*I remembered*

It happened to me too

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