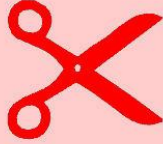


# MIDWESTERN SKIRT



poems by  
**K WEBER**

## 2018 INTRO

It's been 15 years since I self-published the very slim print version of *midwestern skirt*. To date, it is the only one of my 4 books of poetry to be available in a physical copy. It is no longer in print, and it seemed time to give this collection a digital hurrah since my other titles only exist as downloadable PDFs with an audiobook MP3 version as well.

What to say about *midwestern skirt*? There is a whole other iteration of me that exists inside a lot of these poems. I was at the pinnacle of undiagnosed bipolar disorder. I lived in many reckless and strange ways I can't explain, even re-reading a few of these poems. I didn't sleep much but I kept going. I was constantly social and drunk and I was headed toward the hospital. Not long after I published *midwestern skirt*, it was a new year and 2004 immediately put me in a screaming ambulance.

I am glad I was able to capture some of those unusual times in free verse. Some of my favorite poems I have ever written like "Spring, Glen Helen" and "near to sleeping" would never have written themselves or found a way to my page without some deeply inspired times in nature and in trouble.

It wouldn't be until 12 years later, after moving once a year around Dayton and Cincinnati and Dayton and Cincinnati and Dayton and Covington and Dayton that I would be properly diagnosed. Despite the fact that I ran out of that hospital, and for years tried to get well and better, numerous obstacles and bad luck just seemed to keep me in a delicate imbalance. I lost my first "real" job a few months after this book was finished and read. From there I just held on to whatever I could in

order to have some sort of life. The days that were filled with euphoric mania were good until they weren't and I didn't want to get out of my bed's underbelly. Most of the time I tried, but when the depression and medication were all wrong and turned on me, the feeling of wanting to fly because you feel an adrenaline rush became a feeling of wanting to fly to the top of the apartment building next to mine and jumping.

So many doctors and therapists and it took me until 2015 to find a human being who immediately saw that I was vastly undertreated for bipolar mania. Say what you will about medications and I will say what I will about my life still kind of being crappy nowadays, but the biggest instigator of my bizarre behavior with nonstop energy and the sudden abandon of all consequence is finally at bay.

These poems rush through my blood. I feel distant from some of these scenes but also find an amazing gratitude for having survived myself or the settings I put myself in when I had little control. I am proud of myself for maintaining a connection to the outdoors during those times when I would rather have been in a bar, lacquered in my own cigarette smoke. I relied heavily on music to act as soundtrack at this time, when I also was going through a divorce, but not really sure what was important to me or why I felt so good or why I felt so very, very miserable.

Moments like the ones I recall in "pavement movement" and "cemetery" were critical. Even though I was spiraling and hadn't quite seen it for myself at the time when I was putting *midwestern skirt* together, I still saw beauty in the ordinary, paused to breathe.

k weber/august 2018

**Foreplay**

I fit your form:  
bee-buzz your ear, save  
you from hum-  
drum

Your back rests  
my spoon, your curve  
slight  
as moon  
sliced against sky

When we've been  
frontal  
and facing, I have  
tasted the fork  
in the tip  
of your tongue

Moved mouth  
over finger-  
tips  
and dented earth  
with my elbow; whole  
arm tugging  
for your shirt

### **Favorite Velvet Day**

wrestle on the floor  
and untie me  
from monotony

the sound  
of a shriek is only  
a few decibels away  
from the canopy  
bed to the bathroom  
where everything becomes  
clean

I notice the details  
in the cool-tiled floor  
and under the sink  
wine bottles  
are wrapped in towels and you  
smell too much like a flavor  
of fruit juice  
to sip

to touch  
a match would rip  
the skin and think  
about the skin and the scent  
of skin and how  
skin seems to melt  
under fluorescent light

why did georgia o'keefe ever  
decide to eye the petals  
and invite herself

inside the microscopic  
beginnings

tomorrow  
we will be  
in mid-morning  
pajamas

and it will be some  
kind of saturday stretched  
out like a siamese cat  
if not thinner  
the lazy  
yarn ball rolled out  
to infinity

you'll dissolve  
into the couch again  
the trees will tap  
against the house there  
will be a haze which forecasts  
a storm

when we were kids  
we thought the fog was dry  
ice almost a smoke  
screen and sometimes as good  
as grey

### Karma calls

When someone stops  
looking *at* me but instead  
looks right *through* me  
I know  
the jig is up

My bills have been  
stacked for weeks  
I was nine  
beers high last night

I woke up  
feeling like I was in  
someone else's dream

I didn't understand  
the onion skins  
on the floor, the  
three cats, the dog  
shit

I made the walk  
of shame to the calmly-lit  
bathroom; stuck my head  
in the toilet  
like I was trying to climb  
back into the womb

Instead of rebirth, I tasted  
mucus and Miller Lite  
all over again

### Spring, Glen Helen

Among the dog-sniffed snow  
trillium, jack-in-the-  
pulpits  
suck in their stomachs  
and get hard  
when you walk by

Sun seeps through  
trees and waters  
a staircase of stones  
pressed  
in dirt

Soon shaded miles  
break into open  
air: a field of green  
grass where wind  
runs

Then trees  
reconvene—

gray-green  
quiet over head

beds of fallen needles  
below cushion footsteps

Even the pines  
hold their breath

### **The summer scratch**

This season I have already peeled  
mosquito stings  
from my too-bare  
forearms and unwound

fresh fruit, leaving skin  
under my fingernails

At night I tuck my  
elbows inside lemongrass  
sleeves and under citronella sweaters,  
and I avoid summer dresses

with my legs  
To become a catch in this humidity

is like playing the lottery  
without ever learning  
winning numbers  
It's easier to simply rub

silver grit off of a ticket  
to reveal a prize

Is this hit or miss? Sure  
thing, missus  
I am currently alive  
to the sound of me

not digging at my face  
with anger or taking apart

my bedroom wall or closet  
with a kicking leg  
or a hair-pulled scream  
I am letting lightning

bugs taste what  
I am really like

And I like the way an evening  
walk now mostly ends where  
it started fifteen years in the past  
with a hand under my shirt

and not an ashtray thrown  
or a mirror being broken

into the palm of my hands  
as a bad-luck  
reminder, a seven-year  
itch that won't pass

**Seasonal wardrobes**

Spring: The cherry  
blossoms

        burst  
into linens

You come

        downstairs

wearing  
their fragrance

Summer: So humid,  
        your mouth under  
my dress

Autumn: Our morning robes  
off in a pile  
of leaves

Our afternoon  
sweaters beside ciders

The scent  
of evening is cedar  
        closets (full-bodied)

Winter: We'll wear anything to keep  
warm where there is  
ice or

where there is  
eyesore

**Mmm hmm**

Out of tune, un-  
furled

I mix  
myself up

and you  
(thank you)

reminded me I was  
everything

on your list  
and I laughed

when you said "stable"  
was on that list

but you told me  
I was stable

because I knew  
when I wasn't

## Nuance

If you pull my hair  
while making love to me  
it won't satisfy  
my urge to pull out  
every strand alone

I know how  
to make my legs  
wet when I want  
and that's not just  
a sweet diversion

Kind of funny  
when we all realized  
the woman who didn't  
have sex on her wedding night  
or during her honeymoon  
was me

Because when we played  
the tape back  
of all my memories  
we saw those private moments  
in my grandma's backyard: me  
next to the drain pipe and under  
the maple tree that to this day  
still has my kite's tail  
trapped at the top

Barbie's tits were in my mouth  
more than once  
and refrigerator boxes  
became cardboard boyfriends

Every other 1980's song  
on the jukebox  
at my favorite bar  
has a video that somehow  
got me hot and all the fire  
hydrants I pass by remind me  
of Dayton summers when I was six  
and no one ever told me  
about sex so I just assumed  
the position



**this month, medicated**

you would have thought  
the bed was on fire  
by my urgent voice, at night,  
disoriented: broken  
lock on a broken  
box

my thoughts unhinged  
themselves, rambled  
for days, had every  
disease, felt every little  
death

it's times like these  
i miss my dog  
and my handwriting's gone  
shaky

and the smell of you  
comes into my home--  
intensified-- reminds me  
of how you made yards  
and bicycles  
easy

i will never know why  
the ease of you  
drifts into my fingers  
and mouth

and the uneasy beauty  
of me right now exists  
in blue-eyed tears

**This morning's walk**

retraced last night's  
distance with you  
but I added one more  
block and alleyway for myself; inhaled  
new daffodils, brown ivy, a heavy  
trash bag that Thursday  
forgot

I missed the past two  
months as I laid restlessly  
indoors, in bed--  
a precursor to laying  
on an operating table  
with my back open  
and parts removed

Three days later I notice  
the neighborhood  
awoke as undisturbed  
as sleeping children; the sun  
was so quiet I could  
almost hear the ache  
of an oak

I guess I'm feeling reborn  
right now and maybe next week I won't  
observe the color of the skin  
under your fingernails  
or the rhythm of awkward feet  
shuffling the sidewalk as I make my way  
through physical therapy and the city

As much as I, freshly  
separated and dissolution-anxious, thought  
four months ago that the phoenix  
tattoo I wore on my back would seem  
cliché, it keeps coming back to remind  
or haunt me

**cemetery**

when you can't relate  
to yourself  
or the living

might as well try the dead

and we did, softly  
stepping past granite  
headboards where they

sleep; souls propped up

in coffins, blanketed  
with earth they used  
to cartwheel and touch

as quietly as pillows

my grandparents rest  
without cancer  
while i smoke and notice

the sky, unclouded

their memorials have stains  
from family  
decorations, since removed

we hold our breath

while a thin sheet  
of a sundried plant  
whispers past

then climbs through the air

higher and still  
yet higher, until we can  
no longer see

and there is not even a breeze

**pavement movement**

(for jacob motherfucking stahl)

the child you wants to ride  
up near-summer hills and steep, paved ways  
when i see you i wonder when  
your cheeks first rose to color  
and how your hair got so strange  
later, sitting in damp grass  
watching and spitting into fountains  
in the park, we eat sushi  
like adults but drink chocolate  
beer like babies nursing aluminum teats  
we feel young and free  
cutting across lanes of traffic and singing  
but strict as schoolmasters  
when kids yell "eat me" and throw  
popsicle sticks and yard clippings at us  
as we stretch a mile or so of shroyer road

**drunk in Cincinnati**

or Newport  
or Covington

wandering off  
from the mansion  
with neon windows

several blocks  
of laughing  
find us  
finding your car

and we wanted to go  
to the Anchor  
so we drove  
away from the water

to the nearest  
gas station to ask  
directions from the nearest  
drunk cab driver

and then we smoked  
the parking lot  
and ate diner food  
under reflections

of rotating colored glass  
and seaman's belongings  
while the earth rotated  
around our conversation

on the ride home  
i eased into sleep  
with your hand on my head  
and my eyelids calm

as sailboats

**The weeds nestled next to the lilies**

You could never be  
a lily, laundered

with your topographical  
mess of hair

Daylight flickers by  
and fumbles

over you  
Looking beyond

I picture you  
in your ragweed dress, dragging

thick along the sidewalk  
while you wait for rain

to drink you in  
to drink you in again

until you're finally filled  
to lily-tips; a wildflower

**And this is what happens**

I know you miss  
my slow tease  
of lips

except when they kiss  
cigarettes

What's happened  
to the bike or the bed  
or even time spent?

I didn't think to lose  
my thoughts: the box

of wine  
invented everything  
past 10PM

That Saturday  
I ashed on a plate

of food you didn't want  
to make and I cried  
on the stairs

because I made  
your face change

**near to sleeping**

uptight and now  
tied up: you  
with red hair  
running down  
your cheeks

your sweat  
is my sigh  
as we play, breath-  
to-breath, while thigh  
undoes thigh

near-sleeping and wet  
i muffle your mouth  
firm with my  
kiss; hard-pressed  
to let you go

**reserve**

my hair swims  
like seaweed  
through the air

you follow  
your dog down  
all these watery  
paths to me

and then a handhold  
turns into a death-  
grip

and a walk  
in the woods  
becomes life  
support

over and over and end

all i know about  
what you think  
of me now is that you  
think of me

on paper

and you  
are pushing twenty  
pages to force  
me out

which is more

comfortable than a door  
screaming shut on me  
which i arrive  
at your house

like a death letter

as soon as  
you stop  
writing me  
down

i will

or won't  
hold my breath  
or your hand  
waiting for the epilogue

so this has been the best and worst year of my life: love and loss, breakups and breakdowns, getting separated, visiting los angeles, sobering up from workaholism, racking up points on my license, writing songs, laying in bed for a few months, having surgery, dog walking, kitchen fire, buying a bike, having my bike stolen, going to shows and being a social butterfly, going to shows and seeing through everyone, fixing up and selling my old house, packing and unpacking, moving out of a ridiculous suburb, moving into an affordable place, settling and re-settling, knitting hats and blankets and purses, sewing, unraveling everything, managing to get wrapped up in drama while simultaneously trying to avoid it, swearing off cell phones, making and receiving mixtapes, listening to records, panic attacks, going on and off benzos, hiking, hand-



holding, thrift store dresses, being outside and inside, playing guitar on the front porch, scrabble, reading, canoeing, basement floods, pipes bursting, ed wood movies, documentaries, blacking out, ambiguous romance, having/lacking self-confidence, cigarettes, tattoos, poetry readings, working on magazines, drinking, french films, journals, chambord martinis, appreciating family, dressing up like the 1951 donut queen, reading zines, hanging out, being in love & loved, spooning, being inspiring and inspired, visiting medway, elbo's overload, cooking, creepy polaroids, your bullshit, mine, spending time, spanning time...& some people don't even get to experience all these things in their entire lives, let alone a year... good or bad, this all added up to me seeing/tasting lots of situations from different angles and gauging how i dealt/deal with my newfound independence in post-separation mode and moving on... i'm writing a lot these days which makes me happy but i remain very true to my undying sad bastard-ness which says a lot about how these things affected me in the end...

yes you

francis pospisil, jacob stahl, brandy  
voiles, debbie kirk, stephanie hoerner,  
alice goguen, tim krug, joshier lumpkin, joe  
liston, misty hudson, amy hunter, nicole  
friend, greg schultz, jason o'mara, joel  
wheeler, andy molloy, lucy nguyen, marc  
betts, brad wright, mark luntzel, karen  
whyte, mike o'neil, bob miller, rob butler,  
nathan lewis, marc betts, brian  
gerhardstein, *failed seeker*, places that let  
me read this stuff out loud using a  
readily/not-so-readily available PA system  
(southgate house, jags, leaf and vine,  
yellow springs monthly reading), neil young,  
leonard cohen, damien jurado, lou barlow,  
rolling stones, soledad brothers, the velvet  
underground, songs:ohia, bob dylan, mallory,  
the kinks, will oldham, billie holiday, red  
house painters, donovan, the clientele,  
pavement, mitch ryder and the detroit  
wheels, nuggets vol. I and II, heather  
mchugh, spencer short, david sedaris, david  
cross, indian food, old issues of *hermeneut*,  
belle the dog, documentaries, *some like it*  
*hot*, woody allen movies, sinus/nasal  
decongestants, karaoke nancy, french films,  
bike rides, hikes, carbohydrates, valley  
thrift store, adequate rest, vodka  
chocolates, knitting and sewing little  
things, bedrest-turned-surgery, my decent  
record collection, found objects, cheap  
beer, my really creepy polaroid camera,  
cemetery walks, hearty soups, mixtapes, my  
mistakes and my family

contact info (as of 2018)

- website:  
<http://kweberandherwords.wordpress.com>
- email: [kweberandherwords@gmail.com](mailto:kweberandherwords@gmail.com)
- soundcloud site for my poetry audiobooks:  
<http://soundcloud.com/kweberandherwords>
- instagram username: **kweberandherwords**
- twitter: i am not a big fan of twitter, but  
i do occasionally loiter there under the  
username **midwesternskirt**



**est. 2003**

...this has been the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of 2018...