

## bp Nichol / CHAPTER 2 FROM A NOVEL - IN - PROGRESS, *JOURNAL*

always i am saying i will remember      always there is forgetting & a  
glimpse of the truth      always the i says always knowing death is near  
more & more certain things become clear      more & more i  
begin like this

i  
wish      once a long time ago i said to myself i wish      nothing more  
this is where it all gets stored up gets released      i tell tales  
i sing songs      i listen to the wind to what goes on

each day  
begins the same      each day i see a little more of the truth      i go back  
again      i stand by the stage where the band had stood      she  
is waiting for me      i ask her to dance      she leads me in towards  
the centre      she leads us all around the rim      we dance to the  
tune the band had played

the dance hall stood where the roads  
came together      we travelled down them somewhere      we were  
there      she had tied her hair away from her face      she was  
graceful      i held her hand      remember the band the tune      it  
was too soon      she spoke to me from somewhere saying there is  
nothing to remember      i remembered      there was nothing there  
i smiled at her      she cried      i gazed up at the sky  
laughing & walked away

if we danced i don't remember  
if we danced i wasn't there      i am sick or tired or laughing all  
the time      if it was night there was no moon      i thot i remembered  
sunshine      i smile & look away      she raises her voice

everything's fine      my daughter brings me the paper      i sit  
up in bed & begin      i cannot stand or walk toward the door  
she stands in the doorway her red dress stirring in the wind

i  
am always forgetting now      now remembering is easy or hard  
i am far afield      he is like that      i am like him

i wanted to  
begin at the beginning      somehow its all the same or so different it  
doesn't matter      some days i can't begin      some days the anxiety is  
too great i push the pen away saying not today gazing out the window  
i want to cry or scream or sit by myself quietly dreaming      that is  
not quite true      i don't know what to do the anxious feeling is too  
large inside me i try to fix it with a name the same feeling as today  
a man brought me my pen & looked at me i looked away murmuring  
not today no letting my eyes close praying

now i am tired      my  
eyes close for awhile      i'll open them again      i'll pick up my pen  
the anxious feeling will be a little less      i'll begin

i wish  
often i don't wish at all any more      once i wished all of the time  
now there is wishing from time to time      soon i will never wish  
again

every morning i begin      sometimes i don't begin at all  
not today i say & will not pick up my pen      my father points his  
finger at me      he calls me a bad boy      i am sad or angry or full of  
joy      i hit the table with my tiny spoon      my mother brings me  
the red bib & the pen      i pick up the paper & begin

once it was  
all different      once i danced with ease around the room      the  
crowds thinned as we moved watching us      we danced all night to  
the same tune      i asked the band to play it again      finally there  
was noone left in the room but me & her dancing      i threw  
them money & they played      i threw them money till finally there

was no more money & no more band & no more tune     i whistled in  
the empty room     we danced around to the tune i whistled     it is  
all so strange     it will never be the same

every evening i walk  
down the road toward the dance hall     every evening i approach  
the young boy digging there     his hair is blonde     he wears a  
sailor cap upon his head     i ask him who he is     he does not  
answer     i ask him for his name     he turns away

every night i  
enter the dance hall     every night i listen to the band     she is there  
she isn't there     i tell her i love her     i tell her i don't care  
every night i try to memorize the tune     every morning it slips  
away     i say that but i say it wrong     every morning it is gone  
there is no knowledge of its passing or sense that i had known it  
before     every night is the first time     every night strikes me for  
the first time     i come walking down the road whistling     the sky  
is a constant shade of blue or purple or there are clouds there a fog  
has fallen i wander in

once it was all so clear     once i held her  
near as we danced across the floor     she had stood in the doorway  
watching as i passed her     i walked around the room listening  
watching the dancers as they moved     later we danced in the centre  
then i asked her & we danced around the rim

every evening i  
leave my room to walk down the road     every evening he is there  
digging in the dry earth     one night she was not there or i met her  
earlier     she came walking out of the wood     she slapped me  
in the face     i cannot remember this     i think it happened  
someone told me later this is how it was     i could not remember

once it was all so clear     every morning i took out my pen & began  
again     i would write the story as i remembered it     her dress  
was red     she wore a sailor's cap upon her head     she took the toy  
shovel from the old man's hand & gave it to me     thank you i said

thank you      they said nothing      would you like to walk with me  
i'm not going far      she looked away      the day was hot & still  
   will you come with me      the old man took hold of her hand  
   i walked away

   some days it is like this      some days nothing  
comes clear      i hold my tiny pen very near or dig holes in the earth  
with it      everything seems very far away      everything seems vague  
   i think she enters my room      i think she stands behind me as he  
names me

   every evening i get up to leave or try to      i cry out to  
her or whisper her name      she forgives me      she forgave      i  
say her name over & over      i write it down      my fingers cramp i  
cannot hold the pen      then i could've written it easily      then  
everything was clear      later everything became vague      now i  
have forgotten      i want to hold her near      i can't remember her  
name

   i wish      i wish i could wish & believe it      if only if  
made sense      if only i could believe in maybe      probably maybe  
will make sense      maybe if will come clear      maybe if i wish  
probably will become believable      i'll get up cheerful      i'll step  
thru the window onto the road      i'll walk away      i'll meet  
someone      maybe

   once it was too cold      once it was so cold i  
couldn't leave      i stayed in the room      i watched the snow      she  
lay beside me not speaking      if we talked i don't remember      if we  
talked it isn't clear      it could've been winter or summer      she  
could've been near me or far away      i don't remember that day  
   i don't remember the time      later she was a line i crossed out  
of a bad poem      later she was grown away from me      later she  
left      later she was a memory came into the mind unbidden      i  
thot of her face      it smiled      later it did not smile      this all

happened later      some of it happened then      now it is happening  
again

always i am wishing i could remember      always i wish &  
the wish becomes vague      if only she were here      if only the road  
would lead there      it leads there      she places the shovel on the  
ground & looks at me

every morning i awake frightened      every  
morning my sister brings me the pen      good morning love i say  
she smiles      good morning love she says      & then

every  
morning i awake frightened      every morning my sister brings me  
the pen      good morning love i say      she smiles      good morning  
love she says      & then

every morning i feel so anxious      every  
morning there is a fear      i am tense or unable to begin      i think  
of words      they don't make sense      i write them down then cross  
them out      i begin again

i went back      one day i went back  
i walked up to the door of the house & went in      a man was  
standing there his face blank      i can't remember what happened  
then

each day begins the same      every night ends the same way  
i begin by picking up my pen      when the day ends i am dancing  
by myself in the middle of the room      i know the next day will be  
the same      i'll open my eyes      i'll pick up my pen      & then

once upon a time this story began differently      once i saw  
everything with clarity      there was no anxious feeling then      there  
was me & her & that was all then      later some things became vague  
i tried to make them clear      this made me anxious or angry i  
was never sure      now everything begins the same      me picking  
up my pen & my daughter bringing me the paper again

some  
days things are different or seem that way      i walk past the dance

hall into the town      i see the house where we once lived      i walk  
up the steps to go inside      i go away      i go away frowning or  
laughing or trying to say goodbye

so often i get up tired      so  
often there is nothing to say      sometimes she's here      sometimes  
we make love      that was all so long ago      long ago she left  
long ago i died      long ago i grew up & left her behind      she is  
dead or old      she'll never be back again      i keep talking      i  
explain

she was waiting for me at the dance hall door      i took  
off my hat as i came in      i bowed & smiled      hello she said      i  
took her hand & lead her onto the floor      i signalled for the band  
to begin      all night we danced      i told her of my life of where i  
lived      i told her everything i remembered      she was quiet

once or twice she smiled      i remember well      it all seems so  
clear      i held her very near      we made love      it is all so plain  
i will explain again

there was a time this story began  
differently      then there was only me & her or we      later there was  
him then them      now nothing is clear      when i began first there  
was noone      now everyone is here      i cry or shout or keep my  
mouth shut      we are too loud      they are quiet      he lies about his  
age about his name      i pick up my pen & begin the explanation

long ago everything changed      long ago i began a different way  
i me or we      him      grey clouds      blue sky      is anything  
the matter      no      blue road      grey leaves      please

long  
ago the whole song was singable      now there are only words or  
fragments of a tune      sometimes at night i dance in my room  
awkwardly      alone      i pick up the pen      the broken tip  
my foot slips      i stumble