

## [How a Woman Describes Hope in Midlife](#) [1]

January 21, 2019 [Writing and Faith](#) [2]  
[Poems](#) [3]

### **Two Poems by Chelsea Dingman**



### **How a Woman Describes Hope in Midlife**

Not yellow. Not feathered  
or winged. Not breathing. Not  
a breast. A womb. The feckless  
night. Not a man. Not the gruff north  
wind. Not the prairie. Not the Gulf.  
Not the places fled in the dusk.  
Not the places fear builds in the mind.

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Not the relentless *thump thump thump*  
of my dumb heart. Not the wheat  
fields, the silos, the oils sands. Not  
the dead, whom I miss so fiercely  
at this distance. Not the faint light  
of the streetcars, the wildfires,  
the suicide sky. Not the bridges  
that forgive water levels. Not the rain,  
unburied. Not the little I have left  
to look forward to, except the child  
that empties of me like the body  
from a lake. Not even these,  
my deaths, which some days sound  
like the bells in the belly of the goat  
that still roams the alleys of my child-  
hood, starving. Instead, notice  
the trees. How they ask for nothing,  
except to be, for centuries.





## Address

For the first time in years, I don't know  
light. A family of rabbits lives

in the alleys and fields behind houses. The sun  
has gone out. The world, at war.

I try to remember what I want. Connection.  
Someone close enough to see. And yet

distance is the animal  
sky, always in retreat.

I miss God some nights.  
How easily we give up on things

we can't see. Staggering, the dark  
seems to hold all that exists

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now. I don't know how  
the world ends, but I know fire

lies. Somewhere, the trees burn  
to wicks of what they once were.

I can't think about the sound as they burn.  
There is so little left worth listening for.

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### Art Information

- "Sunset" and "Archways" (details) © Jocelyn Pike; used by permission.



Chelsea Dingman's first book, *Thaw*, was the recipient of the National Poetry Series (University of Georgia Press, 2017). She is also the author of the chapbook *What Bodies Have I Moved* (Madhouse Press, 2018). She has won the *Southeast Review's* Gearhart Poetry Prize, *Sycamore Review's* Wabash Prize, *Water-Stone Review's* Jane Kenyon Poetry Prize, and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association's Creative Writing Award for Poetry.

For more information, visit [Chelsea Dingman's website](#) [4].

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### Links:

- [1] <https://talkingwriting.com/how-woman-describes-hope-midlife>
- [2] <https://talkingwriting.com/tw-issue-themes/writing-and-faith>
- [3] <https://talkingwriting.com/tw-channels-and-categories/poems>
- [4] <http://www.chelseadingman.com>

