

**care/free**  
by Crystal Bowden

My eyes dart over the boxes,  
    your boxes, boxes  
you keep sending -

Me shoved and smashed  
    into boxes

I've made a practice of

time watching clocks,

keeping a log of  
the last time we talked,  
the last time we laughed,  
the last time I felt like yours.

I can count on my fingers the number of times

I felt wholly loved by you,

    this is why I am a peanut -

brittle, cracking, easily tossed away

I can only hope to be swallowed up by  
the grasping arms of the green of our earth

    to feed that which we've tried to destroy  
sometimes I imagine - this -

a wild, care/free, precious

version of myself that might exist if -

she is a dream I keep tucked away in an envelope,  
    sealed with a kiss,

the secret hope of a bruised heart.