

## HOW TO GET BY

Since you have to start and end with something,  
make it sound: the sound of toffee-colored  
alto sax riffs sliding off hotcakes, trumpets  
keening crushed ice and java, pianos spraying  
barbs of fire over a tough skeleton of drums.  
Blend in verbena and mint from Southern nights,  
October moon dipped in satin-melt, fish  
silvering to the surface to whisper whole notes,  
quivering the lunar smear on rumpled black water.  
Tune it to chiffon, warm clay, blue steel,  
malleable, infallible, indelible. Pour it  
in the revved-up engine driving the solar machine.

Since you have to call it something, call it jazz,  
Gershwin style, Charlie-Bird, Duke and Doc style.  
Everything else insinuating into your ears,  
your years, is unsound noise. Jazz comes together  
as something you can move to, sit still to, kiss to,  
milk cows to. You can heal to jazz, or die to it  
when the time comes, easy-smiling like my Uncle Hal.

One note attracts another, forms a spiral  
like human cells, connects a cadence. Somebody  
invented things to blow and beat, bow and strum,  
concentrating the layers you can hear-- never mind  
those you can't or those secret increments  
of after-pulse you can't quite feel,  
all lending vibes to the parts you can.

Jazz harmonizes snow, lightning, gin, Jello,  
a lemon look that says leave, a laugh that says love.  
Some passages sing tears, ache-to-the-bone,  
write-a-psalm tones or melon-sweet, sass-hot measures  
rolling off tongues before they smoke. Jazz  
never loses its cool, always finds that one space  
you can't close off, winds through your vents,  
your veins, firing synapses along the way,  
a synopsis of your life.

*Book sample*

--Glenna Holloway,  
SENSATIONS MAGAZINE, 2001