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bioremediation

I've seen enough bedrooms
of (first born) baby boys
to know that my brother sleeps
in an industrial wasteland

where clouds trickle through glass window pipes
and trans parent pains let them fill that space.
where the smoke and smog drown sinking sons
and spider web sisters dangle doubt from dream
catchers.

enter the hard hat (baseball cap) zone //
dirt diamonds are but brownfields
if the shovel in hand suggests toxic sludge
“make this valley full of trenches”

let me
unfurl your fists
tell me when and if
shooting shouts or shots into the void
might help.
please
keep scratching poison sumac records
if perry panics and requires
backup en route to Babylon
please

don't ask me to fill
hole-hearted serrated sorry
ditches you haphazardly dug
mathematically mapped,

six feet deep but if his body should be compost
may it be the bleeding, breathing
(lifegiving) kind.
so that weeping willowed boughs are enough
to whisper water exists nearby.

no one forecasted the faltering, now falling,
half audible shadow of an exiled saint
bowing his head to pray in papers
already licked, already lit, already

cried enough rainstorms to send
(first born) baby boys
rolling over reefs of cracked coral kings

I've seen enough
baby boys
to know that my brother
could light up a room.

the candle melts quick but truth is
all those tricks we were taught, how
plants only grow in the light
the fact of the matter is
manzanita seeds germinate
following fire
the way *spathodea* might smolder this spring and
bloom the next

the way I'm burning here, too,
(big) Brother
breathing myself into existence
how Allen Ginsberg writes the way he respire;

how sunflowers turn to face the sun,
illuminating railyards
accumulating nuclear waste

A Description of the World and Why it's Gonna Be OK

The light from distant stars going red.
Out there it's a million, million miles to anywhere,
and still weighs twice what it should.
Down here we took the animals buried the deepest
and buried them in the sky instead.
We rubbed all the bumps until they were flat,
and applied a thin layer of cement.
We gathered our favorite pieces of plastic
and gave them to the sea creatures,
so they'd have something to do for a thousand years.
We made an island the size of Texas
just for them, and set it adrift.
All it took was some persistence.
All it took was aerosol dreams and formaldehyde.
All it took was jet fuel and booze.

Sometimes when the whole worlds asleep,
the snow gets tired of all that mess
and hides the cigarette shrines and gasoline footprints.
Sometimes if you're lucky you'll be there,
and you can watch as she covers it all up,
one gentle eraser stroke at a time.
And if you're really lucky, you'll have someone by your
side, and you can turn to them and say,
"Nice, isn't it".
And they'll agree.
"Yeah, it's nice".

Don't go thinking you exist.
You're the last thing a gulag prisoner thought up
before he turned into a popsicle,
he was pretending life was perfect.

Unblooming

We trace hallways carved in the ice,
with salt embroidered boots,
by television glimmer windows and putting green steps,
under snow candied wires,
past mud and soot and those who are made of both
and call the dust home,
In waking fever dreams we stumble,
thankful for the poison dissolving our brains
and the warmth it brings,
into plaster caverns of welcome relief,
where we condense like the unblooming of a flower
under duct tape lights and cigarette fog,
so malt liquor mingles with the muck on our shoes
and look for things that are good

Poem I

Weber's heart-broke
watching a friend
slowly kill
the beautiful
things within them;

wilting, Weber wondered
what went wrong.

Was it the flaunting of falsehoods?
The messy meaning?

The puzzlings of his life;
pulled all apart
and put back together wrong.

Weber, asked if anyone had seen
his certainty,

but his friend just finished the deed
casting his gaze away.

Poem VII

Weber coddled his sensibilities,
holding them near,
In view
of that paltry pack of hypocrites
cawing at air.

His flirtation with death
ended him,
and he thought maybe
Nature might call.

It did.

And Weber suffered
the dirty consequences.

A year of thoughtlessness

On the days I have to be convinced I'm a writer,
My jeans are baggy and the shower's forgotten the shape
of my skin.

The rocks under my feet shrug under my weight
The sky forgets to leave a voicemail
And I'm left in the colorless swath of Thursday,
The bed stuck to me like silk hugs corn.

I leave my mailbox full because we both know I'll never
write back

I keep my sheets full because we both know I'll never sit
quietly with loneliness.

I'll never sit quietly with loneliness

But the bowling balls making circuits around my skull

Turn my brain into beet juice

And my pink tongue turns the angry cranberry blue of
September and December and March

My pink cranberry tongue does not spit quietly with
loneliness

I can't help but kiss the people who want to gut me.

I am the fawn in spring and the lamb in January

But when august comes I am raw and open and jagged.

When I am jagged the shower forgets the shape of my skin

And my sheets fill up

And loneliness turns into Sunday and Monday

Some days she has to convince me that I am a woman

So I grab onto her pinky finger with my whole fist

And she leads me down and up the hallway again and
again

Until I can recognize the path we are on

Just a straight line but it's zagging in my beet juice brain

Escaping loneliness comes with more lonely
Her pinky shrugs under my weight
And fifty cents makes no sense
And his fist falls fat on my chest, but it sort of fits
perfectly
After one hundred times

Loneliness turns into cranberry blue
And filling my sheets with knobby knees makes for a
terrible night's sleep
So I filled my sheets with round and soft and pink
With purple wine and purple pubic hair
I would write an essay about round and soft and pink
Write letters about pink and soft and round
I think knobby knees are heavier than lonely.

Some mornings my mother has to remind me I am a
daughter
But every night I dream about my chest and warm and soft
taking a vacation
And I look at my own face,
Erase the round and warm and pull back my hair
Push my pelvis out and talk dirty to the skinny boy in the
bathroom mirror
I think beautiful and pretty roll off me like beets would roll
off a round world.

I heard the boy who curdled his honey words
Use his fists to turn a hole in the wall into beet juice
Turn white Thursday into black Sunday.
I stayed overnight and massaged his suffering knuckles
I'm not sure how to sit with lonely

So I replace it with red wine and holes in the wall
And I'm not sure how to turn me into myself
So I drink the beets and I hide the cranberries
And I eat warm toast with soft pink
Let my sheets fill up with her favorite songs
But not with her glitter

And I take my mother's call
And I convince myself I'm a writer
I introduce my skin to my shower
And last night I fell asleep with my pinky in my mouth
And last night purple July
And late July purple
And late
And

A Trifle Harder to Stand When Everyone Else Is Lying Down

I stand for emotion, I stand for expression
I stand for credential-less faith in direction
I stand for laughter and I stand for crying
I stand for the living as I stand for the dying
I stand for the light swallowed whole by the dark
I stand for the present moment I stand in a park
I stand for the lawmen, who govern with reason
I stand for the traitors who dabble with treason
I stand for your rights as I stand for mine too
Sometimes I do stand when there's nothing better to do
I stand for the sun while I stand for the moon
I stand for the moment when they both reach high noon
I stand for the rain as I frolic in snow
I stand for not knowing where the hell one's to go
I stand while I may for to crisscross the lines
I stand for good taste just as I stand for good times
I stand with my heart beating loud in my brain
I stand for the sins we all wash down the drain
I stand for the fortunate and I stand for the poor
I stand for the conmen who think they know more
I stand for your face when it sparkles and shines
I stand for your soul because I believe it's divine
I stand for all passions and furious play
I stand for I know not what I am trying to say

Jumper Cable Roots

there's a rusty oven in the middle of a field
miles away from any beaten path & i forgot to believe in
god, because there ain't no atheist on the front line

the birch tree leaned over the burners of the brand less,
peeling oven
the rust curdled the stove
& i forgot what crying felt like

& don't you know that when the sun set
i could've sworn the leaves on the birch
set fire for being too close to the stovetop
& i forgot to tell anyone i was afraid of death

but i hadn't been on a beaten path
or felt a hand on my back in far too long
& this poor rusty oven looked like it missed a home, or at
least
a pie baking inside of it

the birch's charred body quaked with the wind
& i felt tears running down my cheeks
but i didn't know that's what they were called
it was a secret baptism
with my feet covered in mud

i imagined there was a god that might want me
but i didn't have any money left to place my bets
i sat in the field & felt the sun try to melt my blisters
try to heal my cracks

but the sun said goodbye before my skin fell off
i found myself rebirthed & reburned
by an old rusty oven
with a birch across its chest

i heard a choir of crickets welcome me back
but they don't give a damn
they'll be singing just as loud as they were then
when the world ends

the birch bark smoldered at dusk
i fell into the grass
& i pulled up a dandelion looking for some roots
but found jumper cables instead
i grabbed the cables
& shocked myself
back to breathing
back to staring at the rust
crunching the side of the oven

when the leaves from the birch were on fire
i didn't say sorry
but i wish that i had
because, now, i am just so far

from a beaten path
from a known north
from a place under the covers
& from a lie dressed as truth

i looked through the fog at dusk & thought i could
understand something for once but i scraped my shins on
brambles
& i haven't stopped bleeding since

my heart quaked & ignited my breath
like the birch falling slowly onto the stovetop,
crushing the oven, trapping my toes
i felt like i was staring at nothing but corners

but the world burns brightest when
it's afraid of its own shadow
& its expectations
it made me think i was fearless

then i fucked until there was a hole in my body
you could say it was my heart, but i know better
i felt my skin rotting through my smiles,
gritted, in spite of myself

oh but i still believe in ovens
& i still believe in a hand on my back
but i just can't leave this field
i have lost expectations

& i have found uncertainty
i wish i had more time to spell it all out
but i am beginning to realize,
that's just not the point

now there's a change in the sky & i swear i can hear the
moon sighing
looking down on me with cratered eyes
it makes me feel silly to call this field a home

i look around like i can see more than stars
but it takes time to remember who you are

Exile from the natural world

I.

It was the familiar hands of Girlhood
That held mine in the open and arid West
When I was so alone.
It was the hands of Girlhood
That placed mine on shovels,
Blind worms squirming in between fingers,
But the Girlhood I knew was full of curiosity,
She luxuriated in the dirt and She insisted
That I did not pull away
It was Girlhood who made my screams delights,
And my eyes never tired
Free of ailments, free of a bun ankle,
Free of a sharp tongue, free of a sexual manifesto
Free of the protective exoskeleton
Grown with time,
But Girlhood was unbothered by the tenderness,
She was only ever screaming “free!”

II.

What else was there to hold me?
When I kept whipping my head around at night
To real and less-than-real noises,
No present threats, just
A lump of danger always sitting in my throat
So that I couldn't quite swallow
I couldn't quite talk myself out of the paranoia-
Scaredy cat!
The kind of bravery that I have in armfuls
Will never be the kind
That lets me walk home alone at night.

III.

On July 4th, when the great wall of flame
Met our mountain,
There were huge drones of sound overhead
And red chemicals raining from the sky
Onto gaping crowds drunk in the public park.
Just a few displaced of hundreds, we watched
Six thousand acres reduced to hot ash and wind.
I had asked for deliverance,
But I had never asked for this.

IV.

What was I supposed to say-
In leaving, in fleeing, in apology?
That I was too full of precarity, or
That I was too loose on sobriety, or
That I thought the vastness would swallow me whole,
Make me gone,
I hoped to God it would.
And instead it just held me in perfect stasis,
As if in consideration.

V.

Girlhood has a voice like my mother
When she used to sing,
“Please dear tender Shepard hear me
Bless thy little lambs tonight.”
Or like Patti Smith
When she sang “Gloria.”
I keep waiting for the world
To reveal its tender insides to me,
Even if I’m not sure they exist.

Crossroad

Stranger! Sorry
but since we've met walking this road
by our cool high-ceilinged halls
& dank crawl-space of pleasure
 could we wave –
forgiving ourselves for stalling the other's motions
of course & having weaved stitches of language
sewn with passion to warm us – be for one moment
 one before we go keeping on?