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## ...and the heart beats longingly

four legs crossed over one another  
the folds of skin curve together  
revealing canyons and valleys  
spilling mounds of living, flowing flesh

a raw, impatient grip  
creeps to the front of my chest  
nearly searing the skin open  
so I gulp deeper

burial for another day  
yet, the soil will soon thin out  
the roots will extend deeper  
until forcibly uncovered

I want to hold you and know you  
the chest burns louder  
an eruption of flames takes force  
deep inside an onyx pit

this child learned to dig holes  
to bury the darkness  
forming fossils, calcified and decayed  
that resurface after time spent away

you can remember the shell  
of what something used to be  
simply by putting your hands  
around the smooth, solid bones

call it a framework of the demons:  
colliding fragments in the atmosphere  
that erupt into brooding color  
pit of fire meets uncharted borealis

## Summer before

Last summer was a hell and a half-  
Assed, open air market where  
We all knew our worth.  
Our steps, quick sips of hot coffee in the sun  
Our skins made kings of brown mud  
We brought home for a second  
And our mud became darker.  
Shake off all that thick,  
Shook silly like the bells  
We only listened at 2  
We only listened when we were hungry  
For something that would last.

Every night can match my earliest memory.  
The sound of a stutter  
The bad milk in the fridge  
A car singing and rocking and nothing  
The red halo running on a breath and a half  
The stranger the evening becomes the more  
I remember  
We all spoke English like a whisper  
Each inhalation stolen  
Flicked on like a lighter  
And we'd wait to turn off  
I remember  
You were fifty and lost in your  
Black haired memories,  
I remember  
How they were not of me.

## Antiques

Two dead mockingbirds in a metal tin,  
Glass technicolor windows let the light shine in.  
Antiquities rest quietly on the shelf,  
While I mumble softly to myself.  
In a pine box of treasures, all I see is you  
The gifts that you gave me, words that didn't come true.  
We disposed of their bodies, fragile and frail  
Concluding their song with a hammer and nail  
Laying deep in the earth, they sleep with no breath  
Silence is long in the presence of death.  
I now have to wonder as I lay awake at this hour  
Are we pushing up daisies or some other strange flowers?

There's still dirt on the soles of my shoes  
Subtle but potent reminders of you.  
The footsteps in the hallway are only my own  
An empty old house it's no longer a home.

## My Older Brother Thomas Has Never Done Anything Wrong In His Life

two heads rub together like  
shiny dimes in our father's  
front pocket. yours  
grew straight and thick mine  
almost white and  
soft like the shit you  
pull out of a milkweed pod.

i liked to think that that's where i came from;  
some milkweed pod. you came from heaven;  
everyone knows that.

you grew up all tall and straight and thin like a  
pink cattail i  
grew up  
too  
but not as fast  
as you.

in may i breathed in swollen yellow pollen that stuck  
to my fingers and the back of my throat;  
butterflies erupted from my lips while  
you knelt in the backyard after  
mowing the lawn  
and puked up wet grass.  
you stood up laughing while  
daylilies scrubbed grass stains off of  
our blue back pockets.

polyester rope and electricity ran through your palms mine  
were bloodstained with acrylic paint hot  
magenta wild orchid primrose.

you pulled weeds in the front yard and dreamed of  
suburbia on the living room floor with streets and lights  
and trucks and a church while  
i braided dandelions into our mother's hair  
every day for three years.

our teeth are straight now but my hair grew out brown.  
poppies push through  
the seams of my tennis whites you saw  
them bloom that day we raced to the courts,  
all four knees and  
two palms.

pour red wine over  
fresh wounds [you could shotgun a bottle] before i knew  
that the human heart is no bigger than a fist,  
before you could protect me  
from anyone breaking mine, before  
i knew the difference between there, their,  
and they're  
throwing daffodils at my feet while i walk to school you  
stop to pick up the petals.

age seventeen you cut the buttons off your  
eyelids i'm fourteen gluing mine shut with  
hair gel and pouring pomade down my throat feeling  
my pharynx fuse.  
twenty-two i'm nineteen i press flowers on the left side of  
my chest  
between layers  
of skin while

your lego millenium falcon melts like oil through the  
fingers  
on your callused left hand.  
you're running for the university i'm running  
for my life

the next morning i plucked the marshmallows out of my  
lucky charms i pulled the leaves off four leaf clovers with  
my front teeth,  
i crushed rainbows between my back molars i  
let shooting stars dissolve  
on the back of my tongue.

you came from heaven; everyone knows that.  
the sun's spilling through the kitchen windows  
now,

i know that you'll finish the cereal without even  
asking for milk.







## Synchrony

Grandpa Jack - It's Tuesday morning around eleven & I imagine you're doing crosswords in the kitchen in nothing but your underwear & a pen. Well, why not? These days I'm sure you'd say you're doing nothing: you've earned the right to several muffins & blueberry, all sugary, never a whole grain sort of guy anyway, you lie like sky in sun & drift holding on to the world as it shifts to light & slips to night like it's nothing could break us just a sunset coming. What I mean is I thought of you today setting my watch back. I remember you on your dining room's wooden clock moved those hands & creaking time like nothing broke & set my mind to chiming & to synchronizing. On the face of it all you'd say we only track the dots & keep a sense of order neat & in that way the day's no better to hold our hours than the night: it changes nothing for a gear just distracts us from the fact it's sixty seconds that we stack end on end to make a year. Who cares by their count it's eleven: the count was always theirs. What you mean is the watch I've here is good for nothing: it had stopped long before you took it from your junk drawer & I could try to fix it, sure, but it's working time has passed & I'll wear the leather strap still not ticking through the glass cracked 'til it's nothing more than wristed weight for dotted hands. What you meant is clocks & sky both prove the night is nothing so Jack you oughtn't worry: you're still to mind the time but it's just another sunset coming.

## A Speck

Floating

Found a speck in my water  
Glass, a floating black thing.

Might be alive,  
might be dust.

Want to pick it out with my  
Hands but they are  
too dirty,

Too dirty for a clean glass  
Full of clear, cold water:  
pure.

If I look away,  
I might forget it's there,

Take a sip  
Swallow it.

The dot is drowning here,  
Drowning in my water glass.

Rescue it,  
Dip my finger in the drink.

I want to hold it in my  
Hand,

I want to keep it  
All to my self.

Where my finger moves,  
it flees.

Cannot grasp the tiny speck—  
Splashing water  
everywhere.

Fingers dripping wet,  
the glass  
Smudged,  
Tainted,  
Dirty.

Lost the fleck in the puddle  
On the table. Can't see it.

Won't ever hold it now, no  
Need a cloth now, wipe it up  
Now

It's gone and  
I'm thirsty.

## Poem XVI

Weber was sick of gray areas.  
Give him an idea &  
he shall praise its idolatry.

No more rights or wrongs  
or goods or bads.

No more thinking or deciding,  
just give it to em easy.

A blind subscriber  
and willing imbiber  
they'd call him.

Happy they'd call him.  
Crazy they'd call him.

Weber supposed  
that if here were to live for  
any given cause,

it'd be better than dying  
with a brain, uncomfortable  
in its own skull.

And a mind split  
by a perilous parallel.

## Poem XV

Weber,  
staring at words before him,  
began to parse the day.

He wondered,  
had he picked the right  
things to read?

With only sixteen hours to begin with  
and only four remaining for thinking,

he panicked at the thought of picking wrongly.  
He had picked wrongly before, and wrongly knew him too  
often to be,  
but a friend.

He had filled the empty pockets of his head with novels by  
the dime, tableaus of the mind, and all the  
other wasting types in kind, but

-Would today be the same?

Weber thought himself asunder, changing his name from  
Weber Wright to Weber Wrong,

if only to feel the grooves of another way of being,  
well,

Weber.

## Longest Day of the Year Blues

I am cutting back volunteer garlic  
On the longest day of the year  
And curses keep escaping from my lips  
And I keep dragging my feet  
Counting the green and curling shoots collecting in my  
palms  
Dripping their hot sweet lifeblood,  
Hoping it might burn skin like it burns nostrils  
The knife is so sharp and uncaring-  
They say  
*"This is what we do for a better harvest."*

We did not know what it was to be the other  
Not in full, anyways.  
I am not sure if I skimmed the surface  
Running my hands over and over,  
Or if I touched the bottom, only for a moment maybe,  
Kicking up the kind of black river silt  
That has never seen the sun.  
A complete inventory of what I left with, instead of  
completion:  
The knowledge that honeybees get depressed  
Four new favorite songs  
And a sweetness stuck deep between my molars,  
Something I keep running my tongue over in this solitude  
You say:  
*"Too much time has passed"*  
And I still taste hard candy, I say  
*"I have consecrated proof."*

Lounge like a rag doll on the sloped greenhouse roof,  
Burn into beer-rounded cheeks the red of a sun that feels  
vengeful  
Look down into town, some far-off planet,

No one has touched me in a month,  
I've been circling around forgiveness for a month  
Or maybe it's just the mountaintop.  
The top of the world is breaking my back bent over the  
ground,  
The top of the world has me craving tobacco,  
Making long distance calls when the sun goes down  
The top of the world is lush green heartbreak.  
The top of the world, June 21<sup>st</sup>, is redolent with garlic  
And silence  
And the knowledge that I can scream as loud as I wanted.  
You say you want it  
*"holding hands down the street in the city, drinking wine"*  
I say I want it  
*"to be morning,*  
*I just want it to be morning again."*



## Lipstick Lullabies

The day breaks and the sea shivers  
The waves pass judgement; you wash ashore  
I watch your salt caked face  
Laying upon my rocks  
I give you a sad smile  
I know that it's me  
You've come to see  
I don't have to be very convincing  
You've already fallen for a Siren's song  
Such a silly game

Baby, does my song satisfy you?  
It's all I can give  
Yet, you'll always want more  
Bit by bit, we melt away  
Women into sand  
It's all we can do  
to will you away from yourselves  
From your facade of strength  
Hiding years of hurt  
And a lifetimes of pain

And so it all comes to pass  
My sisters and I let out small tears  
For the skulls that line our beaches  
Our songs won't change unless you do  
But, all the same  
We wash our hands  
Reapply our lipstick  
We open our mouths  
To sing out again  
And again

## Lackluster

i'll leave the earth now  
on the lookout for something better  
than tacky reminders  
of what we've already done

and i think about things overdone  
as i watch you with your roll up jeans  
your granola and fake happiness  
shakey graves playing softly  
you're the same as everyone else  
which is to say,  
you're just like me,

telling myself, im no longer afraid of you  
no longer afraid of the Let Down  
im afraid of hating myself  
i shouldn't be afraid at all  
fill my ears with lies

about how everyone is doing *well*  
we're all just doing so *well*  
the sappy instagram posts are lying  
i've got lackluster for days,  
let me count the ways

that i've twisted my convictions  
into fiction  
i'm so bent that  
my head's between my ass cheeks

i'd like to tell you i have a plan  
but the only one i have

is to jump out the window  
before you have the chance  
to ask me how my day was

and to be sure,  
i've tried not to be careless  
but the piano player shut the lid on his fingers  
he won't play anymore  
no one told us  
we'd have to make up our own melodies

## 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?