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Gramp's Truck

My dad got the silver Toyota Tacoma in Blue Hill
One November,
And I remember
Feeling guilty for being excited
That I'd have a car to go with my license -
For some reason the splatter patterns
Of mud on the bumper turned my face white.

My dad cleaned it top to bottom
Like a hunter with his rifle—
He never spoke a word
As we drove it to the mechanic's.
I saw the muscle in his jaw
Twitch
Out of the corner of my eye.

I took it for the summer,
That small silver stallion I struggled to tame
But managed to make my own,
Despite the "Townie" stickers on the cab
And how my uncles were sure to react
pinned under the wheels of flashbacks
Down at the family restaurant
When they saw that old truck swing in -
But it was just me who hopped out,
Late for my shift again.

One night I got home and
I couldn't find my damn wallet.
Rummaging through the center console
I discovered a hidden compartment.

There I found the only thing left
of the Tacoma's late owner,
An unopened nip of menthol mint
Doctor McGillicuddy's
sparkling in the dashboard light
And I shook my head
At my father leaving this bullet
To linger in his side
a self-punishment or hurt pride
it left no taste for schnapps
Left behind by his Pops.
I saw a flash of Gramp:
Gunpowder-Gray-haired, his
Glasses catching T.V. glare,
Staring at us from his butt-worn chair.

I hurt my hands
twisting off the green bottle-cap
I took aim at my mouth
And swallowed it back

Cigarettes Part 1

When I put that first filter
Between my crimson lips
I already knew how to pull
How to cup hand round lighter
Assured, graceful, brooding, calm
I learned from my favorite teacher
Grew up watching her long fingers
Caress cigarette after cigarette
Strong nails, well manicured
Were her personal metronome
Each orchestrated flick sending ash flying
Out open windows
Cascading down grey porch steps
Knees drawn in loosely to her chest
She always told me
Do as I say, not as I do

Cigarettes Part 2

The smell of nicotine
Tucked under fingernails
Burrowed into the topography of a fingerprint
Will always make me inhale heavy
To fill my lungs and cloud my heart with it
Mothering hands come to rub my head
Detangling every curly snarl

Blasphemous Kids

We sat at the edge of the sunny cemetery
satisfied with the blasphemous situation
we had placed ourselves in
“Roll it with page 666!”
“No, no, page 420!”
I don’t remember which page
of the pocket-sized Gideon’s Bible
we chose
but we rolled a fat joint with it
ceremoniously
Then, we lounged
we passed our bible-joint around
just the three of us
breathing easy like the trees above us
feeling the breeze
the sweet summer day gifted us
We were delighted
to have found a way
to deter even the holy savior
from saving us
from our rowdiness
Come at us, Jesus
and we’ll combine you into a
toxic concoction of marijuana and fire
and then we’ll consume you at the
mercy of a 99 cent lighter
Into our
young, beautiful lungs
you go!
And when we’re through with you
you’ll only be wisps of smoke
with no choice
but to slink away
up and away
out of our air

Get out of my hair, mom
you don't understand
that pot
is not
a big
deal!

That was me, age fourteen
head in the clouds from shitty weed
Indeed
our pot was bad but damn
that wasn't the point!
The point was to orient ourselves
toward originality
so, we occupied ourselves
with blasphemy
and weed, and beer
we didn't steer clear
of much
the three of us
and we were fucking weird
we feared nothing except
not being weird
well
It's been half a decade since
that brilliantly blasphemous
and sunny day in the cemetery
and I can say it all worked out okay
our sins were simpler then

but then again
so were sunny days

Apothecary Dream

In a dream I own an apothecary
I inherit an old house
An aching weathered building
And I will fill it with light
Love, medicine, education
This building and I have a deep admiration
For each other
In a way words can't really express
Just a general appreciation
For each other
An exchange of the living
And the lived
In reality I come into my magic
Tell everybody in town
About my dream
Act in ways that hope
To get me closer
To meeting the building
In dreams
I think this building is white
Two stories with a basement
That has secrets
And mold
The basement will tell me stories
And I will get drunk
Off of them
And red wine
Which I will keep
In a corner to age
One day I will grow as old as the house
And the wine
And we will all laugh at how young

And full of lushness
Everything around us is
And I will be in the basement
I will lay down on the soot covered floor
Close my eyes
And become the house
And await the next person
To dream of me

Mexico City

There is a certain painful peace that comes
from leaving
someone.

Someone who loved you too good.
Who knew you too well.
It's hard to pretend you aren't
when you see all you are in their eyes.

So you left.
You moved to Mexico City
It's the best and worst thing you've ever done.
And it cripples you.
It ignites you.
It makes you feel wicked and alive in a way you've
never known and

sometimes it takes your breath away
so that ¿cómo está? becomes ¿cómo est? and everyone
thinks you're Chilean.

And you smile.
Because here in the foggy heat
that is this city you are the freest
and most lovely person you have ever known.

It comes in waves
and it's nice
because, you tell yourself,
You deserve this.
It's refreshing to feel things other than happiness.
It means you have a heart.
A strong one.
Capable of shattering so deep and
so loud you had to run it across borders

into a new language
the language your heart speaks
when it's alone and trying desperately

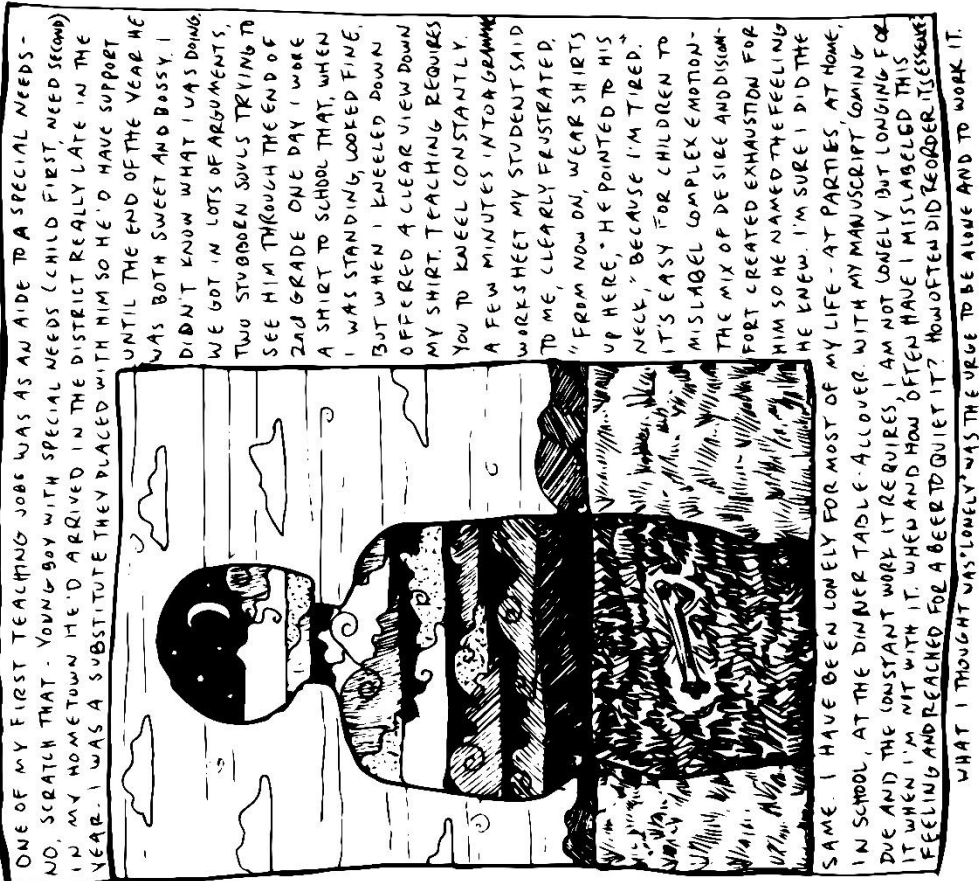
to understand where it came from
where it is going
what it expected to find here
so far from home.

In the light of a city that
has never known you
you are a beautiful broken masterpiece.
And when you feel your own heart
beating loudly in your chest
moving up to painfully fill your ribcage
your sinews
your forgotten places
it is reminding you
that no matter how desperately you may want to be
how deeply you are trying to prove this
you are never really, truly, alone.

And this, though it will cause panic,
should bring you peace.
Peace in knowing this choice is not yours to make
That no matter what you do
you cannot leave yourself behind.

So, you hold your own hand as
you remember everyone who wanted,
who tried to love you.
All those hearts
those sweet breaths
that you couldn't
you wouldn't
let in.

Lonely



In March 1999 When You Told Me That You Loved

me did you see the way the snow heaped on fence posts like miniature taj mahals or were you busy with wires / behind the television *I love you also*. / when you told her that you'd given up too did you hear the sand that rushed from my clothes, the tulips from my mouth as one by one my baby teeth / abandoned me on the mattress. / before I lost my balance the moon collected them, made me a crown, called me its prince, said i was just dramatic.

in the summer of 2006 when I stood in the bathroom / and puked up mussel shells and hydrangea you gave me five dollars because I made it / to the toilet. I always knew you loved that damn carpet. / when you tell me you left the island / i ask did you / stop at the lake like you always do, did you / jump off the bluff like you always do. when you got home did you call us / did you hold the receiver between your chin and your collarbone like you always do. I could hear you in the garden, hear the blackberries through the phone. the cicadas never left you alone,

did they. before I fell from the ceiling, father, / did you feel the heat from the hardwood floor. I think i must've left the door ajar, I / had no idea my silence could ever be so / loud.

Where I Lived

Sidewalks crumble
stone rubble crumble
under rubber toes

Sagging mailboxes sing through clenched teeth and
creak and chip under orange glow

Leaves waltzing on
puddles hiss
the world is bleeding

It's true

Round rubies
blood that clings
like hair on fleece and tastes
like days
you can't sleep

You can't pick your knees
up from the dirt
because home hurts

Lemon juice in paper cuts

You lay gripping sunshine

Everyone wants to
push noses
into cherry carpet

You can trace
hot air balloons
with me

If we have time

You kick
sunflowers into
my eyes

Feet pressed towards sky

Get lost!

Ants cover your arms in diamond tattoos

An itch that reminds feet
Corduroy is far away

Cross-legged Tuesday passengers and fingernails painted
Earth

We wait for strawberry rhubarb pie
to beckon us

And hold our breath.

Why no friends?

Since a youth my voice has said,

Do not touch the point.

It might be from fear,
but what could possibly be so sharp
anyways? I have yet to convulse at
a single tangible thing but this I dread.
When the point carved air within an inch
from your eye did it thrill you? I bet danger looks lovely
in the muck of your skin. Should we name it?
Tame it? Like all wild things this cannot be free,
cannot be free like me. A part of me could die sweetly
in a thoughtful web. A more dominant part of me
is always gasping. In truth, nothing fits the palm of my hand
and so nothing can hurt me and what kind of fool
is that? My torn fingers still hold my
best doll's hand. I exhumed
my capacity for joy in each perfect
plastic arm and toe. The cold hard girl
never gave me a second glance,
but wasn't the paint on her eye and
lip beautiful?

Should you try touch, use both arms.

Show me stability. What we wouldn't give
for this, for you, for him, for the doll that
watched my sleep for years without
consent. But should I try touch, my
stomach would go first. The tip *should*
go first in the soft and undeserving parts of me
and of course. I would touch with the whole
of my being. Each grossly wrapped
arm and left arm in flesh like
borrowed garb.

Generation Superhero

we're all revolutionaries blinded by forest fires
of our own making
but we'd still fly if we were able
there's no guarantee that we'll have a future
so we try to find time for the now
and make saving the day a habit
make jumping fences a skill,
making doing what we're told hard
are we as helpless as we think?
barring insurmountable money-dripping foes,
we are the sinister villains
& the fearless sidekicks
of our own comic strips
we weren't bit by radioactive bugs,
we were born here, not on some far-off planet,
we were never meant to bleed starlight,
and so why are we still trying?
what have we forgotten?
how silly are we to have neglected our bodies
to have neglected our imperfections
needless to say, they should have been celebrated
not cast off like an old costume
in spite of years of looking to
plaster cast molds
for examples of goals
we all still shake in our sheets
at the thought of waking up alone
we've become fearful of bathing
in the sink holes of
ever present anxiety
diagnosed by doctors and psychiatrists
who forget how heavy our capes are

the super-men of our generation
have been left aimless and unaccountable
the wonder-women are empowered
flying high, fueled by rage
we forget that power
survives without gender
oh but it is true,
we've wasted self actualization
on vanity dressed as inspiration
but we are a generation
that was not given a choice
of sitting on the sidelines
of opting out
of watching our mistakes
we will never be able to enjoy apathy
because we have the world to save
surrounded by walls,
we are forced to scale them
and so we do
it's my hope that you won't
just watch us fall
and to my disheartened peers
i'll just say this;

sure, you weren't born a superhero,
but if that's what you've grown into,
wear your cape proud-
there are people dressing up as you
for Halloween
pick your treats
& save your tricks

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?