



built by the sea

poems and pictures

*a literacy and chesapeake
bay fellows collection*

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FALL

trees reach sharpened nails to a sharp sky.
sharp sun snaps branches into splinters of
silence—
crunchy, echoing
silence—
sharp

silence.

lie in the emptiness and drown
for an hour, darling.
let hollow light drip into
your hollow bones.
fill your soul with nothing but feel your soul
still overflow.

still, lie,
cold sun dripping from your eyes.

you haven't cut your
nails in months, and now
you hold your hands out in front of you and
watch
blue bones bound to you bind you to a sky,
an earth,
an eerie feeling.

nails long sharp reach to a sky short, a sun
short. the sun
is already setting.
the season is long, the days
short.

lie for a while. let your blue bones find warmth
in brown earth— there will be
decaying, eating, rotten
warmth—
garlic-breath warmth,

and reach your hands to the sun.
let your nails scrape the sky.
watch it all crack
 like ice.



flipside

maybe a meteor crashes and the earth
finally caves in,
folds itself into a neat little envelope and
mails itself right to hell (no
need for stamps where they're going—
thank god, they've all turned to ash
anyways).

but that's how it goes.

it's all fallen before—
fallen right through the cracks and
back out,
right side up when everything's upside
down.

but if you just flip yourself over,
i guess, nothing ever really changed.

(the envelope unfolded itself right back
where it stood and
called that place hell
because, hell,
it looked the damn same)

elevated

even the mountains' peaks go blunt,
fade to fields.

do you find comfort in this?
in the way it all calms continuously
the earth becomes welcome
vaguely; not suddenly
you lay in grass and find no rocks
if a snake crosses your path, it is surely
well-fed before you cross its mind.

does this gentle dull placate your paranoid
soul?
so afraid that the tree you sit beneath will
snap that you
cut it down before it gets
the chance.

marshes were mountains;
forests were fields;
all were burned.

the earth,
slowly softening,
designed to dull,
meant to maul mountains *and* mansions,
flatten forests *and* fountains,

smooth out every wrinkle,

so we're all on the same level now.

to be a bird

oh! to be a bird
to drift along the clouds
perch among the trees
rest beside the lakes

to have the stars smile down at you
the people gaze up at you
to have the wind lift you up
the earth catch your fall

to watch lives unfold
to watch some fold in on themselves
to be detached from it all
simply an observer, nothing more

oh, to let the world continue on beneath you!
you have escaped it
you have far greater things
to worry about



still, life

life seems to drift further and further away
as the clouds come to a halt in the sky
the birds have ceased their song
the grass stops its sway

even the sun slows
her daily pilgrimage west

a bee bumbles, buzzing,
beyond my vision

hangs delicately from a flower
whose petals overflow like a fountain
down her dark cherry stalk

he sits only for a second
waiting just for her to kiss him
 goodnight

but the jealous wind revenges
drags him to another day

salt of life

water giggled at the leaves while they
danced in afternoon sun

a haze settled down for a nap
the air was too heavy— too tired,
to shoo it off our porch

the toad too hopeless to
take one hop
even when

tires drilled forward
the engine screaming
already begging forgiveness

alas! meet a toad now too dead to move

blood pressed in to gravel
light, now soaked with golden evening,
washes away the mourning

and a butterfly
takes her first gentle sip
drinks the salt of life

no delicate stem, no colorful petal

only the mangled, flattened
stain
of a small life interrupted

she will suck it dry

wineberry picking in denim

scraping thorns against rough fabric
as i crush coarse leaves below
no-longer-white shoes

plants hug my legs
as if beckoning
for me to take a seat

amongst rambling brambles and
supercilious stalks
so they may tower over me at last
marking a much needed
return of fear

old blue pants trek slowly
an older white jar fills slower
fresh bubbling red berries spill from
greedy thirsting young hands
still learning as

hostile green thorns teach them
how to turn redder
than the juices
dripping down my throat

this morning i went
wineberry picking in denim

stars

reaching down to hold our faces
in their glow
peeking at us through the clouds
always giving us more to search for
more to find

i see them in your eyes
ocean blue eyes
sky blue eyes
full of shattered glass
salty tears
a thousand imploding stars



there is a breeze

a breeze there

is; a

breeze

like

hundreds of tiny

fish

nibbling

at my shoulders

standing on my

toes

laughing---

there is a fish

in a house

and it likes to live in the house

because the house is a home but not for me,
for the fish

and for

the nibblings and standings and laughings

and dreamings and longings and swimmings

and dyings---

does the fish have to live in the house?

why?

i'd like to think

they're

not

alive.

Death of a Dragonfly

The air is thick, stuck to the walls
and dripping. The plaster is ruined.

A quiet, slow grey
spreads itself throughout
the quiet, slow blue
and the sun weeps again
its quiet, slow tears.

The dragonfly swims through the garden,
wings heavy.
It falters, falls, sinks,
drowns into its grave; its shadow
swallows it into the soil,
quiet, slow,
gone.

crape myrtle bark

armor, rough
builder of blooming pink:
the work is done. your moss has
grown too thick, too
 heavy
loose your fingers and be shed.
rest and retire now—feed
the earth.

