

“Racetracks”

Running isn't the only thing I'm not good at anymore.
I used to draw racetracks on my wrists so I'd have places to go
when I got too tired of myself to sit in my own skin.
Years of dusty footprints have worn them out
but I still feel the red paint under my toes
on days that my ankles ache and my tendons scream –
Achilles wasn't the only one with a weakness.

I thought you could be the electricity in my veins
that would keep me in one place for longer
than it takes to catch a lungful of air.
But the need to feel my blood move never left
so I did that to you instead.

I thought you could loosen my knots,
stretch me out until I could almost touch you –
not quite. I never could reach far enough
or see past my own edges to the spaces
that could have belonged to both of us
if only I could sit still for long enough
to have one space to call my own.

The days I spent tugging free from your fingertips
reminded me that freedom isn't what you said it was:
a lifetime of you and me sitting on our futures.
No, freedom is the sound of a tight muscle
complaining with each mile I forced it through.
It's the repetitiveness of putting one foot in front of the other
over and over and over until I lost count
of the seconds, days, hours spent trying to escape
things I didn't know I was afraid of.

I'm sorry I can't take you with me
to look for a place to finally rest my bones
and fix the holes in my shoes like I wanted you to fix me.
There are too many steps for me to take
and too many heartbeats for me to listen to
until my entire body vibrates with the sound.
You know I only feel alive when my blood moves
and the air is too hard to catch with my lungs.

So I'll draw my racetracks in the ground this time
and try to make my skin feel like home
as I scrape the paint from underneath my soles.
Please don't try to follow me;
I don't want to be found this time.