

BAM The ceramic glare of fluorescent lights rattles against the torn gray ceiling spotted with coffee stains and fingernail scratches. They bloom yellowgreen over the corner of the retina, half obscured by the dark spiny silhouettes of lashes unfolding ~breathe here~ like [spindly legs]. The right hand twitches aimlessly as the left rests on the cloudy resin keys of the tally box, clicking away at a slowly deepening ~long breath~ indentation in the counter.

The clock *ka-chunk* ticks one more place to the right and recoils a little, sagging into its cracked wall screw- its arm points thirty degrees late and my lung hitches a little as my gut ~quick breath~ betrays my body in favor of gravity. Thirty five degrees late, my vision dampens ever so slightly and stretches the pinhole gleam of tall parking lot lights into long ~last breath here~ astigmatic ~that's all you get~

stars.

Before I → 1. lean [off my stool] → 2. roll [across pavement] → 3. play dead [conversationally] the front door SLAMS shut- an open soup can clatters across the aisle- and suddenly I feel all 14.75 pounds of blunt oxygen closing in on every square inch of me

the can scrapes against the floor tiles, trembles to a stop, lets out a shrill scream, and shears

into a crumpled vertical wafer, which tilts and lingers on its edge for what feels like four fingers too long before silently falling flat under the

shadow

of a slipper-adorned foot, which descends

through the pressure laden atmosphere like a mechanical knife through butter

My eardrums feel like they might burst and as I struggle to raise my cement block head I am met with a blurry view of a

body

swaying

buoyantly

back behind the counter.

my eye is dry



Bleeding

THE GAME: Cards dealt down, heavy as tombstones, bone white edges peeled across the tabletop
A ring of suits fixes the fateful hand to the green velvet with laser gaze,
hawk-like, concrete-hardened, sharp enough to split-
yet each flip-prone to disbelief, wide eyes and temper boiled,
leaves stone faces, grief-struck, carved ugly as the gargoyles that guard

THE CLUB: packed with the city's angry leftovers; muscle, teeth, bone, and claws.
A tinderbox full of halogen-noise, carpet-sweat, hideous wallpaper, and the smell of something rotten.
The band won't play more than half of any song, and the waitstaff(near deaf) lies

ready to pounce at any

glimmer

flash

or flicker of

cash,

well or ill spent to fill.

Yet despite the sensory disarray, the dining booths, stools, dartboards, counters, even the very keel of the floorboards point true as iron filings to a magnet- everything, everyone, every sound tilts ever so slightly towards

the center table

where bets, debts, and lives are traded

easily as (marbles/bottle caps/baseball cards).

Suddenly, the noise sinks to a stop, curtains drop.

A slow draw, a hushed murmur, as the gaunt hand lifts to reveal

THE SPADE: plunges through the dark loam, carves a soft recess for a one-ringed ring finger, once full of life and the power to bend the nature of truth itself. Soft skin now cracked and stained, its history slowly eroding.

Each whorl and groove,

a coin palmed,

a watch snatched,

a handkerchief produced.

Its talent soon recognized, plucked off the streets and gifted a spot at the table:

Keep the seats full and the stakes high

The voice guides the eye while the hands do the real talking

Bleed them bit by bit, but leave them with a promise- a hook to pull them back

So it learned to steal.

Old coupons

Hair ties

Movie tickets

Necklaces

Hand-me-downs

Family heirlooms

(The boss's daughter left her heart out in the rain, and it stole that too.)

As time wore on, the brush became a blade, but

the work was solid and the winnings were good.

But cheating in *life* begs more punishment than a spilled drink and a lightened purse. The price was permanent.

And so, in proper fashion, it was

stolen

taken

pushed

into the earth, ready to be

dissolved,

consumed, and

born anew.

Its gold band lies abandoned, chairs empty and fireplace cold, nothing but a hard recess in the living room left by

THE DIAMOND: taken for scraps, its twin still tied to the other lover- home bound, buried in dark, thick cigar smoke and looming paperwork pillars. Cursed to remember, yearn for, and listen to the ruckus and jumble of life coming up from underneath the floorboards for eternity.

Dreaming of a day that it knows will never come.

Haunted by the day it has already lived a thousand times-

a once-familiar hand(now nothing more than an implement) knife-pinned to the wall, still clutching (five aces);

the tear and scream, and a shower of gold as the last bit of magic bleeds to the floor.

Hand is lifeless. Transformation complete. Nothing left to do but clutch at what was once there;

THE HEART: aches

for what else is a heart good for?

Sun-bleached memories of a boardwalk street fair,

vendors bursting with fruits, postcards, and cheap jewelry that spilled rainbow shards of light across the weathered planks

each aisle overflowing with noise, color, a beautiful and haphazard kaleidoscope

but in the periphery, something truly impossible

An apple, plain as all to see,

up

falling

caught- then vanished, by a precise, yet elegant hand.

eyes meet, and a long shadow stretches out to cover

the distance. gentle words exchanged, and the hand raises to a young face, curious and enraptured.

of all the time-worn performances, a coin behind the ear lies squarely in textbook center yet

the brief touch reveals an unexpected moment of

true magic. And with this

a heart

lifts

yet

a sharp voice cuts through-
the curtains fall lifeless
and the heavy back-handedness of a cold father
and the shame of a young man who let their art become their agony
form the crux of

THE JOKE.

The bar finally closes, the drunks go home, followed by a flock of angry mutterings and empty promises.
Cleans the tables, sheathes the now worn-out deck, and locks the doors from the inside.

Today was a bad day.

Scoops up winnings, but they slip through a gap in the grasp.
The booze that once lubricated those finely-tuned pistons and cogs and pulleys lies pooled, slowly leaking out

a botched lift

a clumsy pass

a heavy palm

drops falling, draining, splattering

Earlier, a sideways look from the boss over a red flush clutched tight, confirmed the last rushed game's inevitable trajectory:

[*You're bleeding.*]

The frame shakes as faces flash by on the muddled projector screen,
years, hopes, dreams lost as the chips fall farther, tumbling to the ground at a sloth-like pace,
each boom echoing across the wooden walls of the empty lamp-lit box
Eyes shut tight, breath held, clenched in white knuckled fists and fingers.

The shaking slowly subsides.

Memories of a childhood game about a stowaway's dream,
one counted on dirt-caked and juice-stained

knuckles

Two, one, see how they run,
three, four, settle your score,
six, five, shipped out alive

This one only makes it to four.

drawbridge

-in east providence, perched over the Seekonk river, nailed to the weathered and decaying planks, are two office chairs, peeling but soft, still spinning.
-pvc pipe ribs jut out of the rails, maybe for flags or fishing rods or fireworks
-the wind blew from the north to the south, all of the pigeons sat on a line together just two beams down
-across the water, raised train tracks jut out at an impossible angle, missing (sleepers/ties) from the rails let the sky through like gaps in teeth, bright graffiti etched on every surface- they must have hung off the side over the water as they sprayed each line.
-250 feet up in the air, a seat suspended by two thin ropes from a rusty bar sways in the strong wind
-you brought two moon cakes to share- they were flat and disc-like, unlike the cylindrical ones stuffed with sweet bean paste. We ate and spun on the chairs and watched the birds and listened to the water.

bad radar

-a different (we) passed underneath the very same waters, fighting the current and choppy waves in a small inflatable craft, ill equipped in every aspect, hoodie and t-shirt soaked by the 38-degree chilled water, faces and backs lapped by the wind and the stray strokes of our oars.
-we'd picked a time simply by circumstance, without a care for the conditions. When Sunday came around, we shrugged and figured that it was as good a day as any, and set off towards the launch point.
-We set up on the dock at bold point, where a sharp, corrugated, and barnacle encrusted metal catwalk that casually lowered itself into the icy depths. Bitter gusts whipped over the white tipped waves and lashed at our throats, drawing tears from our eyes. For ten minutes, we inflated, rotated, and assembled the kayak, ignoring our steadily mounting uncertainty. Upon placing it in the water, the winds were so strong that we almost lost the boat.
-after half an hour spent leaning into the wind and agonizingly creeping upstream, we reached a rest point- the support beams of an overpass spanning the river, the large concrete stones of which we clung to like (tiny ants in a downpour)

redrawn, be

-a different (we), this time on the opposite side of the river. Swinging out around the fence over open air, rocks, broken bottles, and shopping carts lying stranded below. The wind blew from the north to the south, and we leaned ever so slightly to the left as we carefully stepped our way over broken planks, watching the water splash and churn and crash against itself forty feet below.
-the path upwards, a single flight of stairs stuck to the left side of the outstretched iron arm, guard rail completely dissolved by the wind. Sitting at the top on a narrow platform, our backs against the massive gears, each wide enough for us to stand inside.
-on the way there, we smelled something sweet in the air- it was not food, nor a plant. Something familiar, nostalgic perhaps, but ever so slightly out of reach. And we thought it funny that today might be the first and last time we would ever smell something so wonderful.
-i was unsure if this was the first and last time we would ever see each other again.
-as we neared the familiar skyline of home, I prepared to turn back
but you invited me to stay
and so I turned the other corner instead.
and together we went
everywhere;

-the basement store room where the skeletons of deer, elephants, and pigs lay curled and waiting in the dark; you shook their hand as we wove through the aisles, shelves stacked high with jars and vials and cases once full of life
-the library of plants from around the world, each dried, packed, filed away into folders and rows of metal cabinets, robbed of their color and smell and texture
-the secret window room at the top of the house where two cursed lovers once locked each other (in/out) in desperation, to break the cruel spell of spirits, liquid and intangible
-four stories up, we scaled the library, feet slipping on stone shingles, hands grasping at thin pipes, and lay there on the black rubber roof, watching the sky.

beg (we)

You spoke of
[the weight of the world, to do good]
and I spoke of
[the weight of a life, to do more]
and by the time it was two we were well and truly cold despite the stars and so we climbed through a window and sat in the dark and later said goodbye

and it really was a goodbye of sorts

armed dream

In the dark
In the dark
In the dark
In the dark a
 hand

In the dark a hand
 towards the
In the dark, a
 pair of hands raise

 into the light
In the darkness, a pair of hands raze
 into
 the
 light

Dipping out of black oil,
no current

 waters silent
 oars broken
 locked tight

one turns face up | fingers stretched upwards | like toothpick trees | crumbling pillars of (salt, sand),
the other slowly bows [A-A-AA-] to meet [A-AA-A-] the open gesture
and in that very moment [AA-A-A-] an indestructible [A-A-A-A] weapon forms

*no mirror unbroken no egg unshattered no mirror unbroken no egg unshattered
no egg unbroken no mirror unshattered no egg unbroken no mirror unshattered
no mirror unbroken no egg unshattered no mirror unbroken no egg unshattered
no egg unbroken no mirror unshattered no egg unbroken no mirror unshattered*

palms welded shut now hang heavy with a density that thickens the air,
pulls the shadows

 from
 their
 drainage

covers
swaying with a malevolent softness
 lying
 at
 wait

and all at once that sickening dread that

felt since the moment of waking falls in thick waves, pulsating, pounding through the thin wooden doors of the heart which fills
the chest, cramming the lungs and stomach and liver out of the way, spreading itself against the ribs and spine and expanding into
the arms and legs which lie bloated with a primal fear that

slowly
sickeningly
rotates
twists
digs its heels into the concrete
and pools
into a pure rage that threatens
to melt itself with its white heat

I

am

a

I

am

a

a / weapon / desires / a / target

a / mallet / needs / a / surface

a / tide / hides / a / catastrophe

After the game

Stand tall at the pitching mound, sounds hitch in your voice,
fall into the harsh sound, strain against the headwind, hush, head wound up more than the arms,
brain pounded to mush as the built batter stairs you down across the sixty feet of packed dirt

To the left, proud parents' faces contorted, shouting something through thick molasses,
glass lenses hiked up on your nose place a reflection in your right cornea-
a tall street light flickers and bends after each gust, and a half open pizza box flies and tumbles down the
street, wax papers spilling across the pavement

Counting stitches on the ball, you hold your breath and count to ten
For each game that makes you, takes you, and pulls you to the back to have a stern word
chips away at something already made weak by time and wind and wear and water

You wind up and perch, twisted like a rubber band but feeling more like a rag
and smile knowing that
you're not good enough
and the game is already over
and no one expected much of you anyway
and tomorrow you will wake up to a glass of orange juice and a bowl of cereal and a brilliant blue sky and
will think of today no longer

but in the distance a shout slaps you out of your bedroom and back to earth- everyone is still watching
so you snap back and let it fly

(Journal)

Perhaps I should begin by stating that it is 1:53 PM. After all, that is the first thing I see when I wake. The bleak snowless landscape outside my ice-paned window casts a boxed shaft of light across my room, freezing the lazy dust pinpricks that float in the air and holding them captive like gnats in amber. The beam continues on its static journey, arcing over my overturned desk and cutting a pure and uniform rectangle into the soft wooden floorboards, a stark contrast to the mangled papers that surround it. Strewn about the desk lie misshapen scraps of parchment of varying degrees of decay- an ancient journal entry here, an unsent letter there, bits and pieces of half-worked stories streaked and soiled with the mud-splattered ferocity of a violent and historic struggle.

I shut my eyes firmly, squinting them until all I can see are hazy fireworks, as if I could somehow shut out the echoes of his rage-filled voice. The sound of a squeaking reel as it rewinds off into the blackness, casting its rod in reverse. The lights darken, then suddenly flash, rising out of the imprints in my retinas and back into my nightstand lamp, back into the ceiling, back into the walls and floors of the night before.

His dirt-caked iron palm, already slightly compressed from the imminent moment of impact, flies away from my cheek and back to his side as if suddenly holstered. I watch as the outright murderous expression on his face melts, or shall I say re-freezes into a slightly more composed facade. My sister, petrified in her split-second hysteria, slowly lowers her hand from her mouth, then removes herself from my bedroom door, each backwards step through the hallway twisting her features out of their marbled horror and back to her previous expression of curiosity and concern, two steps more and her eyes regain their innocence. Sharpened words fly out the crevices in the air behind me and back into his contorted mouth.

think you can do better than me?

Each word, a punch through my gut...Behind my head, a mess of papers un-smears itself from the wall and coalesces back into a rumpled sheaf which he waves like a weapon... How did he find them? Did [they] sweep the floors yesterday?

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-It had all started so innocuously, I remember the <sounds> of the birds/humming of insects with lampwit wings and the curve of the garden hedges stretching up like long, inverted ladles into the liquid sky... the familiar, sweet smelling chrome-brushed metalicism that I've come to recognize in the heft and balance of this ink pen as it dips into the curving edges of the paper. [something about its stolen-ness, its illegality makes the writing all the more worthwhile]

CUE the jingle and creak of the front door as it crashes open with an unspoken urgency, late night lamplight spilling in through the unbarred portal that steams and curls off of the shoulders of his hunched and compacted form, CUE the distant stench of his reeking breath, the muffled clomping steps of his sodden boots on the living room carpet, the punctual crash of a clumsily-draped coat hanger that smacks against the ground like the soon-to-be-shattered cream-colored whiskey glasses that for now reside patiently on their respective shelves.

Why is he early tonight? A worm of unease crawls into my stomach... he must have gotten into a fight with one of the pool players again... damn intellectual pricks. I remember the week before, how a guest had so carelessly mentioned the theater on the corner of 95th, how my father's body went rigid, the clipped shortness of his words, how he had silently trembled gripped his fork(which he usually holds like a stylus) as if wielding a broken sword. It can really throw you off, when it happens; he'll be laughing and drinking, big dumb smile on his face, and bam!

Watching his eyes shatter and fall in on themselves, smoke peeling out of the holes. What a waste. That's what he said when the theater laid him off and sent him spiraling, reeling into a great big mound of debt.

I shudder as I hear the softer, somewhat irregular footsteps ascending the stairs, the noise of his swaying left, then right, the balloon of his torso tugging against the fastened tethers of his long, tired legs... Quick- scramble for the light switch, but he's already at the door. A pause, followed by a low grumble that drifts in through the keyhole.

Daisy, that you?

Don't let him come in. I cast my pen aside with a clatter and cram the papers into my draw before quickly crawling into bed, leaving the desk lamp on in my haste. As my door creaks open, I sit up, yawning as if he had woken me. He pulls me in tight and I can see the bruises on his cheek, the weariness of his expression [smell the liquor in his breath]

Good night, papa, I murmur, giving in to the rough, yet gentle embrace.

G'night, Daisy, he adds, as an afterthought... good. He seems tired.

My mind relaxes for a moment as I remember the days when he wouldn't come back home so late, when he would take me into town and not leave me alone with mother, when he used to feel fuller, brighter; when he had visions and dreams and would snatch words, stories, characters out of the air, the trees, the ground, the gravel-cheer of the morning radio and channel them into his plays that he would work on through breakfast lunch and dinner beside a hot cup of coffee, back when he wrote for himself and answered to no man. When he was alive, not just living. After all, that was when he met my mother. Sometimes I wish they had never found each other, for it is indeed as he had said before: she shone too bright for his own good. When the theaters lost interest in the genuine and humane and looked instead to the sensationalists, the avant-gardes, my mother's fortune, success, and security cast the shadow of my father's failure two steps ahead of him wherever he walked on the street. Didn't he know that starting a family, raising a child is its own form of writing, if not more lasting? I hold these thoughts in as my heart folds up and he shifts a little in my arms. Then, the sudden stiffening of his shoulders as he looks over mine.

I feel him rise out of my arms, his gaze hardening to steel, and I feel for a moment like a prisoner caught in the blazing spotlights of a watchtower.

-Daisy are those my things-

Listen, pap, I was just borrowing them for a moment,

-Daisy what on earth are you doing with my things-

Pap, I can explain, it's not-

His eyes light upon the corner of the pages protruding from the desk, and I see his face go white as he withdraws pages upon pages of writing, scripts, dialogues, parts of disassembled stories that I one day hoped to {FINISH} The temperature of the room rises as the flamelit shadows from my lamp stretch and grow like spiked fingers that crawl across the ceiling, locking the two of us into the clutches of its searing grasp. I cannot read his expression, half twisted between horror and outrage and nostalgia and guilt, it changes too far too fast, a flip book cartoon of faces.

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I do not see him looking at me as if seeing a ghost of himself standing in the ruins of his career...

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confused,  
surprised to meet his reflection  
at such an inopportune time, but why here and why her?  
Why would she do something like this, conjure this memory, he wonders...  
why plunge into a career of dead ends, when one has everything to begin with? Love, support, beauty, wealth...  
Is she unhappy? If so, what more could she want?

~~~

Do we not give you enough?
Am I so insignificant that you think you can come along and replace me?
Because that hurts, Daisy, that hurts and I will not stand for it and I will not stand for it and I will not be replaced
and you will not do this to me, not after I've lost it all before-
Do you know what it feels like, to pour your heart and soul into something and have it thrown to the curb? To have
your soul stepped on?
I never asked for solutions, I never asked for more than I was given, I followed the rules and worked hard and paid
my dues and what did I get? A denial, an endless postponement, followed by a cash consolation and a pat on the
back.

~~~

His eyes

So much shame in his eyes

What a perverse twist of fate

~~~

I did not know these things that flashed through my father's mind as I cautiously rose to my feet, fixated on the dull red film reel of the past flickering behind his eyelids. Nothing could have prepared me for the vicious turn of events that exploded from an action as innocent as how I lightly touched his arm, then quickly withdrawing, finding its cords trembling with unreleased tension...

{A shove, followed by an increase in volume as his drunkenness rises to a roar... I stumble backwards and his body fills the room as the floor shakes}

{I'm pressed backwards against the headboard of the bed as the memory gains momentum, and the moment is rushing away from me, quickly, falling away from the pavement in legless bounds}

{I scramble, reaching out for something to slow my descent, and I find myself plummeting past the very beginning of the scene. A young Daisy, sitting upon a haphazard stack of shoeboxes and stepstools, just so she could reach the page... Her brow furrowed in an almost comical expression of utmost concentration as she scribbles with grave urgency... It's getting fuzzier now, harder to imprint- the lights of the room elongate into trailing stripes of neon as I fall faster... I was writing something, wasn't I?}

{I bump against something on the way down and it sends me into a tumble, knocking against other windows into the past... there's the time I spent all day crying because I couldn't go to Annie's birthday party(Not our kind of people, mother had gently explained), the time I sprained my ankle at the age of 7 while reaching off a chair for father's books, my first kiss at 15... days of sunshine and days of rain, days where I'd stay alone in my room and listen to mother and father fight while sitting curled up on the windowsill with my knees to my chest, staring at the hole in the wall from when father threw a mug through it... days when my mother would summon me for evening behavioral lectures, spending hours in front of the mirror by the phonograph, watching her shape syllables with the proper accent and tone... learning how to take people's coats, how to smile when you don't mean it, how to see through people instead of seeing them... They never let me outside the house, and I'd pull out my hair from boredom during my afternoon tutoring sessions...

{Still, I fall}

It was so quiet somedays inside the house- father would be out in the city with his friends, and mother would go off to her brunches and shopping trips(an activity that she projected onto a slightly more grown up version of myself), leaving me on my own with strict instructions not to speak to any of the servants. You could walk into the white marble atrium in the middle of the living space and feel the echoes of your footsteps bounce off the bright, blank walls... The silence was so deafening, the perfect stillness of the afternoon... I see myself in that open room growing taller, older as the years pass, sitting on the lawn and listening to the cars go by behind the tall hedges of the yard, waiting, wishing that one of those automobiles would stop for once and take me away... I hear their engines in the distance as I pick up speed...}

{Faces, parties, flashing by in yellowed frames. Will they remember me?}

{Do I remember me?}

What was I writing?

The blurring wail of the engine carries me faster and farther | my weary feet coming off the swift ground and drifting backwards(or is it forwards?) | across the pavement towards the finish line of the present | as a sudden gust of wind strikes me across the face |

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{SEGUE}and pulls me out of the air and back into my seat. A piercing crack of brilliance breaks through my sleep-crusted eye, and I remember that today is a Sunday. The bright yellow markers that stretch down the road pass under our wheels with regular bumps, causing the keys in the glove compartment to jingle every few moments. Slanted reflections of great pine trees slide up and over the angled windows as I tilt my head back and breathe in the blue warmth of the sky.

You are speaking, and at first I can only pull bits and pieces of words out of the cacophonous downdraft and throttle.

{[Ruins]}            {[It's]}    {[all]}    {[going]}            {[mess]}

I lean over as a draft gusts over the windshield, threatening to blow my hat off.

{["What?"]}

{[It's all in the]} {[paper]}, you shout back, before the breeze snatches the rest away. Up ahead, the trees begin to thin out- in the distance I see the beginning of our driveway, the winding road of trim bushes that slowly replace the unruly pines.

{["In the what, you say?"]}

You slow the car down, the hum and chatter of its eager motors subsiding to a quiet and attentive purr.

"Race, my dear. The human race and its preservation... quite a gripping title, wouldn't you say?" Truth be told, the topic couldn't interest me less. But I give in with a smile and a forgiving nod, and wonder if you knew if I was listening or not. We pull up to the drive as you unlock the entrance, and I note that the gardener has replaced the azaleas by the drive after Pammy trampled them last week. You continue on your tangent while helping me out of my coat as I pass down the hallway through concentric layers of yellow and cream colored doorways towards the living room.

"I say, they're everywhere nowadays- you've seen them on our downtown escapades, haven't you, honey? They're coming to walk and talk like us, they're taking our jobs... I hear that some of those black folks are even bleaching their skin nowadays- Ha! As if that would fool any common man." You follow me down the hall, and I wonder if Pam is home or if she went off with the babysitter this afternoon.

The house looks different now. When I inherited it the atrium seemed much too large, the hallways too winding, the cold windowpanes looming high above my head, staring down like ominous sentries. Now the hallways are filled with pictures, small paintings, photographs from years ago(family gatherings, sporting events, pictures by the lake). The foyer grows cluttered with shoes, a small sign hangs on the wall from when we moved in {}. A bright blue key rack beside the doorway sports numerous odds and ends: hats, convention lanyards, good luck charms, and a hand-woven bracelet from Arizona that You gave me years ago. The living room, once a wide and barren space, now holds an old and battered kitchen table, its surface bearing layers of scratches, coffee mug marks, and soup stains. I've always tried to get you to turn it in so we can buy a new one, but then you get all stubborn and attached to it like you always do, and so we've kept it throughout the years, simply hiring someone to paint over it every spring. In the corner of the room sits a stack of lawn chairs(we'll pull them out next weekend for cloud watching) next to a wicker-woven umbrella stand(for your sporting endeavors. I don't know what it is about umbrellas with you, Tom- even on the clearest day I can't seem to pry it out of your hands. What is it, a weapon? A shield? A crutch? Sometimes I look at you from a distance when we're out and about, you with your trim-cut bowler hat and foul look of mock seriousness, chest puffed out in affable aggression like a skewed Picasso- all angles and elbows).

Off towards the west, sepia rice paper panels frame a floor to ceiling view of the shimmering sunlit lake; whenever you step out on Fridays and Pam is off at her friend's house, I take a book(You used to care, but it doesn't bother you anymore) and a drink out to the patio by the dock and watch the starlings burn bright orange in the setting sun, watch the sky turn deep purple as the lights in the house across the water turn on one by one, illuminating gaslit streaks across the steady lapping of the tide. Sometimes there are fireworks and I watch those too.

## **Out to lunch**

breathe in and fall  
to  
the  
left as the the box tilts  
off the shelf and the  
ground rushes to  
meet you.

once  
in a forest of  
towering reeds as the sky turned faster and the branches stretched to keep up with the clouds,  
and feeling as though you yourself are bending,  
drowning,  
in slow motion  
The tips of the reeds hang (to/from/under) the sky while you and the earth rotate underneath  
from on your shelf  
The box falls and breaks  
and the shattered pieces fall into the gaps between the  
flocks of voices and barking of dogs and  
scraping of battered doors on the pavement  
but your neighbor's dog sounds different  
and the corner store has a blue sign  
and you see three trucks come by this morning  
and you wonder just how long you were gone  
and just how much of the world changed while you weren't looking

**forgive**

forget  
the      wet  
baguette