Spring 2023

BIRDLIME

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BIRDLIME

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by
Zoey Rose Collea

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Acknowledgments

To Mom & Dad for their boundless support amidst the pursuit of my dreams and education.

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Thank you, truly.
This wouldn’t have happened if it weren’t for you all.

To the future...
For my family.
I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want
to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

Mary Oliver, *Starlings in Winter*

Here it is: the new way of living with the world inside of us so we cannot lose it,
and we cannot be lost. You and me are us and them, and it and sky.

Ada Limón, *Bright Dead Things*

I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.

Michelangelo
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I: My Wild

I want to go back to that bosky street where the curves of tree shadows made the houses look like people, bodies lying still under warm shade. When I was nine I imagined myself in one of the houses, reading by a large bay window. When I had the desire to live in such a house, I was able to look at the simplicity of the world and feel lucky from the ease it had in making wildflowers grow on highway meridians, letting horses bray when they tire in the evening – how neighborhoods feel thicker after a thunderstorm.

These observations are the soft, tender glimmers that float above all the rest.

So, I wanted to live there. Right there, I said, in all the wondrous places that exist only because I see, feel, and hear them.

Some luck is easy, precious, free. I am thinking of all the sweet possibilities once again; they are wings.
A Walk Through a Meadow With My Younger Self

Our heaven is a beaten down field.  
We paddle through the wilt of wildflower stems. They smell like green beans when it rains.

Your arms dance, wings  
against the white wind.

When standing behind you  
in the sweet nectar of sun,  
we create a penumbra.

At your docile age,  
you may ask, what is a penumbra?  
I’ll answer – it’s something  
that occurs in space,  
much like an eclipse, partial illumination; the place that is not yet entirely dark.  
We are holographic, an almost shadow. I see our future jet out from the center pit, beaming an iris, eye in the sky.

(*in American law, the penumbra includes rights inferred and implied by living in the “shadows” of rights already explicitly expressed in The Constitution.)

Our freedom, a pupil.  
The planet, a cyclops.
I am so much
taller than you.
    My shadow
    lingers and disappears
    into the shade
    of an oak tree.
You ask me
where I’ve gone.
The sun, too hot
on your back.
I tell you
to come find me.
Glass Lake

Ivory gulls mew, children at play
on shorelines soaked with storm.

Soon, the gulls’ wings whir quiet
into a wet buzz, cicadas
on a late spring day, when the sun
is faintest, a dot of ointment
on the horizon. The trees
are open mouths showing their teeth.

Under the gulls, the bridge casts
an industrial reflection
on a glass lake. The water
is livid paint, wet cement; the gulls dip
into it quickly, so as not to get caught.
Mementos of a Blue Jay

Hold close to me,
your pale blue bust,
while tendering your voice,
    moist and foul, the feeling
    of hot rain in summertime.
We’ll sit here and count the combers
as they search for perfect scallop shells.

How do I appear
in your ultraviolet trance?

Without answer, another
joins you, sweeping in,
cerulean mist, mouth the color of a marigold,
or early autumn.
    You aren’t truly
    blue, only with light scattering
    through barbule cells, nor your friend’s
    mouth yellow-orange, maize.

I’m remembering wrong.

Will you remember
my face, as the crow does?

    Leave me with a feather,
    we will both be azure beings and the world
    will mistake us for pieces of sky, dreaming
    without a body to come back to.
    I will look like you.
The vanes of our plume.
Deceiving earth, the two of us.

Is it too late?

You give credence
to my purple image.

But I am blue.

No, you shake.

I am blue.
City Limits

Off a cliff, seagulls rise from watery shadows
marked by billowing waves,
stirred and angry from the gray, silver lines of storm clouds.

The houses are oblique,
achromatic fingerprints
on white paper, smoking
chimney pipe cigars.

This room is stagnant
as sun rays weave on walls,
how a brain might look, uncorked
from the skeleton and made the color
of champagne.

Where the petrol is,
a long and abandoned building
adorns punk rock graffiti,
reminiscent of a tattooed forearm
dangling out a car window,
waiting for winter to pass.

There is nothing
out the window
but a long stretch
of highway, lassoing the bluffs
on either side, rueful rural reeds;
these are permanent.
The Other Side

Does life pass us by without catching?

Does it happen like this: deer standing
blind on the side of night roads,
just before beams streak tar,
they unconsciously cross through
the spotlights of what could kill them –

to get to the other side?

I see black flies stuck to ropes of rosin –
the catchers, a dull gold
hung near kitchen windows –

soul nomad nats.

I make my thin dreams
fat again, as the sun rises
over Catskill mountains,
like a partner turning
in bed, shaking the other awake.

Today, I found a worn copy of *Born Free*
on a shelf in the back of an alleyway
antique store and lit up at the black-and-white
images of lions, one
dangling her head into the Indian Ocean –

this lioness, after slaughtering village goats,
had to be trained to survive in the wild,
or would be sent to the Rotterdam zoo.
Her giant body grazes
over reeds of Kenya grass,
a pearly auric ring
haloed around her head.
Patients of Virginia

*All good things are wild & free.*

Henry David Thoreau

1.
The Chincoteague wild ponies can be mistaken for sea monsters,
pearly herds coming down the shoreline,
grapite on canvas, cantering along the banks as the mist rolls
over the mallards and snow geese that fly upward like shards of tinsel
at the first sound of their trotting,
under the inclement weather
and over agrestal souls.

Their pace gentles when they reach the cottages, the ones
with subdued shingles and beach towels
left out to dry over tottering wooden spindles,
still held together enough to be called a fence.

2.
One creature stops.
Her black neck is meaty, coruscating with thin shafts of sunshine
that dilate by way of storm cloud edges;
there is no grass under her hooves;
what would be her pasture is now made up of seashells,
garbage and a craggy coastline.

Her mane will never be brushed again and
no face will fall into it, smelling her
seaweed and mammal sweat.

A body will not feel her oscillating spine
under the saddle, lean
their belly over her nape,
thrust spurs into the fat of her gut.

The wondrous secretion of self-possession
sends her breath into a bray.

3.
Our nostrils flare, as she moves towards the water
I swam in this morning.

Wavering and hesitant,
her tongue touches something
larger than a trough.
Hooves and feet in the cider sand.

On such a day like this, I should be inside
waiting, but
I leave.

I can do this now.
Her fence is gone
and mine, only
driftwood and trust.
I Have Horses

I cannot go on the trip
    next week. I have horses
    now, and a dog too.
He wraps his warm body
around my legs
    at night.
I do not miss you.
    He will watch over the farm.
    But he won’t be a killer.
    Did you know,
    I have a farm?
Like the one we talked about
under the stars, they were ships
we said,
sailing towards the whirlpool of the moon.
    We wanted to save
    those horses from
    slaughter, but we had
    yet to have a farm.
    These horses are not the same;
    they will do.
    I can tell
    by their slowness,
    they know they are saved.

Evening, I let them out
to graze and chew
on daisies and primrose. I catch
a glimpse of us. When the sun
begins to go down, the light
butters their
tuft, backs, and bellies.
    They are happiest,
    alone, together
    in the meadow.
At night the mare
moans, alone
in her stall.

She never lets
the other hear.

I am not speaking
of love
or out of turn
and I am not mad
anymore.

To have this, every day –
what a gift.
My Wild

1.
I was born,
red and writhing,
four hours away
from wild horses.
I think about them roaming,
loose and chaotic, until
they fall into graceful canter.
As rightfully as the gulls,
they gather near the edges
of the Outer Banks
and gallop towards a tide
that heaves up,
as if something
is digging into it,
shoveling out the water.
My wild exists here, with them.

2.
Did my wild begin
as a baby? My mother said
I was born with a lot of hair -
like unfurled manes, weatherbeaten
legs that mimic my mother’s,
when they were suspended
in stirrups, awaiting my arrival.

3.
I haven’t found
my wild
in most other things.
It is not at the bottom
of alcohol bottles
glazing empty,
nor from long stares
across the room.

I haven’t found
wild in other countries.
Occasionally, wild creeps
inside my car,
driving across bridges
at twilight.

4.
My wild could be
a shell under the hooves
of Corolla horses.
It could be in the pit
of their eyes,
or the moonstones
I tried saving
from wandering waves.

I lost most to the sand
and current.

5.
I know my wild
comes from words
and fissures of color,
blending, twisting, submerged.

Wild are my dreams
that burrow so far
under the skin,
like the berry
bugs that fall
from Carolina moss,
red and penetrating.
Backyard Sun

The dog is shedding
her coat. She is preparing
for summer. I am letting
the fifty degree weather
turn my skin
red for the same reason.
I get ready for the heat
the way a girl, like me,
readies for the sound
of the screen door thwacking
open and closed. A pregnant
woman saying
she is already a mother.
The tender anticipation
of love and desire.

Can it be like this
all of the time?

I wait with the dog
in the last
of her slumber. I ail
for the sweet burn, the pain
of forgetting
there is an inside
to anything.
Backscatter

The acrylic wings and bottleneck bodies
jilt with pleasure of knowing
they exist everywhere, simultaneously
and splendidly, because –

when such entities: trees, geese, clouds

are deemed to be beautiful, the world

finds a way to make a copy

(creates it twice)

and often backwards, by means

of a honed mirror

or a river.

1
Autumn trees, from brown
and black into final remnants of green.
They burn without feeling –
copper tarnishing taupe.
They are stilts,
matchsticks under the overpass:
mustard, hazel, and crimson.
One into the next,
they hemorrhage!
    Their still image, only moving
    in the ripeness of their reflection.
2
A white yolk satellite
above the bank, shades
in the sparring ripples, turning
ducks into scurrying beetles, searching
for a harbor of light, so holy,
it rings for them like a bell.

3
(These clouds seem incredibly close.)
They pass like aquatic corpses, floating.
I realize they are not where I see them, after
I saw the row
of geese jetting
through the water, seamlessly.

Unknown to their mirage
of divine mirroring, until
I perceive them in the sky.
When I Come Back

_Birds are flowers flying and flowers perched birds._

A. R. Ammons, _Mirrorment_

When I come back

the birds will be bright and distant,
petals on the wind.

The piano will be opened, ready
like windows in spring.

The garden will
be willows and dogwood.

I will pet
the parched Crepe myrtles
and let a hymn

find its way to wings.

                     The fowls will ask
to be let out to graze.

Their chicken wire home
will call them back, a light
turned on over the porch’s screen door.

Home, they roost.
Home, with the eggs
and skin and bright
orange heat patches.
II: Angels

In the back of the suburban Texas house, the yard was made of pebbled stone. My feet danced, trying to save face from the sun. The sun, heavy and old, leftover like a peach pit. The sun would last for months, so my feet would keep dancing, running out of the chlorine pool. Some drowsy afternoons, I’d go to the pool store with Dad and pick out a float while he found the right chemicals. When we returned, I might have laid my body down on the diving board, waiting for the sun to go down. In those hours, I felt time pass through me the way cars wait for traffic lights. I still do. On the porch of the Cape house, late in the evening, when the ocean water sibilated and flowed from a drop-off about a mile away, I danced again. I was scared of the mosquitoes that swarmed the vaulted porch lights, so I made sure to keep my head under the places where there was no luster. Another early summer day, Dad lifted me to one of those lights, where a nest had been made, wedged, secured. The robin’s eggs, a tiffany blue that I was told not to touch.
The Cornflowers Come in Fall

still a summer’s rue, proliferating
over fallow fields, where
a tractor has turned the earth
barren; the harrowed land waits.

Idle days pass,
and nothing grows.
What is a farm
when nothing grows?

Waiting, like my face
behind a window,
where spring fruitions
are dreamt up
during winter mist;
puffer clouds
induced with rain,
blowfish in the sky.

Though summer’s bulb
has died out long ago,
I remember the cornflowers
come in fall.

They know nothing
of waiting, only
of budding blue.

Or were their faint
outlines also a dream?
It doesn’t matter;
here, on my hibernal farm
the flowers bloom from seed
that was sowed while summer
stifled earth,
for autumn days
like these, when I see
cornflowers still bluster.

But it may not be true,
their blue heads, chins
pointed high. What did
I see while waiting?
  What did they
  see before bloom?
Dark salted earth, that’s where
we begin and end and the rest,
waiting. The rest, believing in blue.
The Interspace of a Room I Don’t Know

I imagine this -
the audio static
from a small, red
radio, somewhere
on a loop, sitting
atop a kitchen counter.

Next to it, a hand-painted
saucer specked by
three blueberries (there’s a bush in the garden)
and a half-eaten piece of toast, where
on a larger saucer,
there is an apple, old and moist with
bruises the color of caramel and charcoal.
By the dining table, a woman smells
of hay and vegetable oil,
she could be a painting.
Her breath hums from a tired gut,
sleeping where she eats,
horses fed (the wallpaper is peeling),
she dreams up a morning like this:

Hot porcelain mugs,
rotten food, unintelligible music,
as the blueberry stalks
weigh bow-legged in the backyard.
All of them, warm and bright
from the solar flares delineating their design.
Surname

The Calabria sea
is a foreshore room
with turquoise walls -
a flip of a shell
in the palm -
plaster and bone
running thick
under the thumb.

How far can a feather
float? How long
can a glass bottle
buoy between two
lands? When is a shell
too small for home?

A single shift
of a letter, the body
is taken in,
ribs removed.

There is a change
in tide from the South
of Italy - where the water
is caramel, suede -
to the Atlantic flats
of ocean, sloshing
against city lines.

The letters are mobiles
above their heads, ornamented
before drowning, fish food
for Ellis Island.

About those orange trees,
do they remind you
of your mother’s
arms? Unfolded, lumpy
and sacred, cheek
to bosom.

Every so often, I think
about leaving.
But, what will become
of these things
once the letters
are rearranged?

I peer towards the sky
where the sun
is a citrus stain
and I eat on
the image of
power lines crossing
like branches, the smell
of my perfume
like misplaced water;
the nodes of clouds
revealing a clean bed of blue.
Sea Wings

Spring combs through
the Avocet and his
butterscotch neck; his bill
    is lean like a twig – where noises
    and worms cling as fungi

    back to the Oystercatcher,
her dark head painted
like a Russian doll, eating
itself into oblivion
    with one streak of red – pricking
    the gray oval –
    an oily storm cloud

over the Hudsonian godwit,
chiseled blood-orange, chartreuse
soft, feathers molting into

fall, where the skin is butter,
dulled in summer heat,
unbright with modesty

against the others.
Fly, saltwater
bred into the undertow of night.
Low

The smell of low tide
comes at half past midnight;
when the sun and moon have differences,
they fidget in each other’s withdrawal.

The scent is zombified, hurting
a mortician to this body on the bed
trying to make it pretty again before it
descends into the ground, low

like a naked crab who failed to find
a shell that fits.

The rot is almost clean
almost sweet
almost like sugar on the ends of spume
and it ends eventually after sleeping here
for a while.
It doesn’t leave anything behind.

The hidden crawl back to the mire.
The moon, a nocturnal animal who
tried their luck and
brought prey back with it, except for
the things that wouldn’t budge.
Leviathan

Over this bridge, a sugary dark, boiled molasses, driving through a gloomy candy store, it says “love me” and I do.

Morning, an open door takes the shape of a nimbus cloud, which is pelage in bloom over an abdomen of indefinite.

The river below the bridge reminds me of where it leads.

I once read
of a whale harboring dead to land, stranded from the fleet.
The milky stench feels like home.

The sheets, seaweed around my ankles.

The phosphorescent ceiling, where a surface glisters open.
Abattoir Melody

The field is still, until
our orchestra sounds out
from the grange, into
the green and open barracks.

A hum from the vestige
of our sallow felt bodies.

We turned our hearts
into tambourines, undulating
over rib cage harps –

With our song, we lull
each other to sleep.

Tonight, a swift vision
of separated peace.

In the morning, the wind
is sure to come back, moving
the craniums of white roses
and red daisies
back and forth, back and forth.

The silhouettes of their petals
become a ruse
from the movement, herding
the tors closer, a pall
of blood draped
over the horizon.
Our tusks, protruding
out of these alabaster
skulls as exoskeletons
of Loving County.

Here, my friends are dark circles
hiding under woolen light,
along vines of honeysuckle.

They do not move
when the steel gate opens.

Our kine backs
were safe and hot
under the late August moon.

Livestock melody, hear
our gloaming moans,
wondering where the dirt
road leads.

When discovered, we find
the only time
we sing alone
entails our groans vaporizing
into slaughterhouse smoke.
A Single Gull

Gull, I do not seek eye level.

Though, here you are — finding out you are made to glide, not fly.

You must be able to sleep easily, your bed is a river scarf of pure blue, unfurling below an even purer sky, where no motion tries to combat what is already moving and not, at odds with your small, white waist.

You are pure too, and gliding as a boat without sails, a true traveler, one that appreciates the possibility of being revolved around the Hudson like a bath toy; in this way, you see the view from every angle, allowing the sunset to be as giant as it is.

An imitation between feathers and leaves, you are everything; a boat.

In the distance there wades a real boat: its sail, a wing
above the hull, while
you hold your own
tight to your bosom,
so as not to lift off.

The boat passes you
by, inconspicuously; two white
creatures afloat; your ghost
on the other side
of this tributary.
Angels

By the beach,
horse-flies assail, bite
and settle on wet mounds
of watermelon we eat
every time we breach
from the sea
and ford through the waves
towards the shoreline.

On towels, we dry
out, a salty film
on our arms, washed
away by watermelon juice.

The sun casts
a brilliant sheen
on our damp hair,
turning our heads
into halos; his eyes
are slippery pearls.

Not so far
from us, anglers
stand on docks
made from driftwood,
slicing fish, cutting
down their spines, meat
diverged from bone,
an angel wing
on either side,
white, feathery flesh.
We think it’s ugly.
Our father does the same
to a slab of cod
on parchment paper, we listen
to the little mincing bones,
luminous, opaque pendants.
We think it’s beautiful.

(*some fishermen use trawl nets
instead of rods; they catch
more fish this way.)

I eat an angel
wing for dinner,
wash away my halo
with shampoo
and wonder if our
bones are as trifling,
lacteous as the cod’s.

Come night, moon
swings back, a pendulum
in motion, setting
deep after the last
burn of sun; moonshine
lacquers the ocean; my brother
and I look from the edge
of the escarpment,
more like a road
that’s crumbling towards
the sand below.
The sea is cool;
the waves are infantile,
pacified, as if suckling on moonlight.
Birdlime

Bird-lime
A sticky substance spread on to twigs to trap small birds.

Light is damp
sap on a twig.
I go there.
The leaves are puzzle
pieces in shadow.
My foot is in the shadow
and now, it is a puzzle piece.

It is March, the first
hot day we’ve had
in months. This March
feels different. March
is the entire town, yet
a transient photo
made to be lost.

The day is yearning
to begin or end,
whichever comes first,
whichever lasts forever.

A bird fingers
a noon heaven.
The start
of this magic
is imaginary.

If there is sap
and a foot, there
will be a beginning
and end.

The past is a decimal
between numbers
and my design
is infinite.

The down
on my belly
is showing.

Stay with me,
if I were a bird.
If I were a bird
would I see the
birdlime?

The light is damp
and I am thirsty.

The trees’ heads
jitter because something
is moving toward me.

The trap
was starting to feel
like the maw
of an animal -

*something that ensnares.*

Stay with me,

bird, as you

trill in glue.
The maw was only
a calendar and you
are only time with wings.

I am only
time with a body.
How can we be caught?

Our hearts pump
zeal for tomorrow.

You are not
made to be
stuck for too
long. You
are not made
for anything
and that is grand.
You are made for everything.

That is the beginning
and end.
That is the month
of March in the maw
of June. June is damp
light. I go there.
I wait.

The trees jitter.

The trees jitter.
III: Tremors in the Afterlife

I could always love nature without thought, reason, or doubt. I love its curvature and how it is never completed, never satisfied, always selfish and present. Best, I love how it tells you your future if you look carefully enough. In it, I find a fullness that cannot exist anywhere else. When my life feels incomplete, like a memory half done-up, half created, half true, I think about a white down wing ripping through the sky, so implausible that it has to be something close to a miracle.
Field Notes on Fire

In Berlin a dying
man’s photo is plastered
on cigarette canisters –
he’s in a fetal position, pale
a spring chicken without
feathers – they go on,
we go on, smoking
outside supermarkets,
inside bars when
it’s cold and late into
the winter and all
breath becomes smog –

It is not the smushed tobacco
packed with spit, seering the soft
valley of skin
between two fingers –

It is always the beginning
or the aftermath, never
the middle, (blind to
those phantom flames) –

Terracotta soot, talcum dusting
the bones of Malibu forests
and beachwood –
bonfires with no permits –

Not the blaze I wish
to touch, glowing
on the gas stove, heat
drubbing just before
the flesh –

Or the few candles
pulsing, though not
enough to make a shrine –

But enough to see
the faces of my
family burned out and
adrift among pastoral images, glazed
with pastel television hues –

The fires, vertigo
brought on by ash
pruning, ruining
these trunks, dried
into stalks of licorice like
Madagascar vanilla beans
congregating into lines of midnight –

They should keep me from
California and desert plains,
the cracking dirt
like flower veins, will
my great grandchildren
see the light of day?
Or will these possibilities
be buried (no cremated)
under another luster,
luring in those eyes
that wander into
another ball of –
Fire is droopy, wet and hard
hungry, snapping
down white, hot oaks
as dawn leaks
at the fracture, letting
their colors take boats
and mares, mothers
and goats –

A pile up on
the 405, the vessels
of the road and heart
suffocate, annihilate
one another, going
nowhere, inoperable
hooked to an illness –

We bring it
get well soon
balloons –

Birds plummeting
through Phos-Chek –

A cigarette
dropped on chaff hears

autumn humming,
summer's death metal.
Upstate Delirium

My finest moments
are nimble and hazardous
fish bones plucked
while eating, caught
     between teeth.
The sweetness
of strip mall sunsets
and pitch black
bedrooms, the world
is swallowed whole,
when I look
toward the ceiling.
    I keep warm
near the sultry glow
of house fires;
    I smell gasoline
when I fall
asleep, I am
ready to burn.
After Hours

...and I am out with lanterns, looking for myself.

Emily Dickinson

The night sky is heady with stars.
Each row of suburban roof
aligns to make a single constellation.

Outside creeps with a silence
that can never be had again.
Street lamps boil
over pavement and moths.

Gutter openings are painted red,
ready for war, those rainy
days when the streets flood.

The cars are vacant, lost souls
on the edge of sidewalks.
The penned lawns are strewn
with plastic beach pails and plastic
pools, lean and manmade, flimsy -
standing in a row
outside the county Walmart.

The day was a ringing bell
and a warm breeze.

The cart jiggles,
a wheel is disjointed,
snaking in and out
of aisles shellacked
by overhead fluorescents.

I go outside with the cart
full of plastic bags.
They wiggle with night air, ghosts
of the now paper ones with no handles.

Oh, how a thing can change -
how a thing can change
after not knowing what it was
and reappear, coming back
differently, perfectly.

It is edible now,
far away and inside,
so that it is more than a memory
lost to the ozone,

so that it is always a part of you.
Poem for Yesterday

Did I not hold you
the right way?

Did I not
take the time
to listen to the lilt
of birdsong, strung
tight and high, a hand
run through tree branches;
there is a harp playing.

Should I have eaten
your breakfast more carefully
and had my coffee black?
I set the mug
down, without a coaster;
it left a ring
next to the others, miniature
planets staining
the living room table.

In town, did I not
take the time
to look down
your alleyway, a gray
cave with refracted
light, just enough
to see the trash bags.

You say I spend
too much time
on pointless enterprises,
on chasing fanciful shadows,  
not realizing I’ve lost  
track of my own.

I say there is always  
tomorrow, his head  
on my pillow.

Can I treat today  
differently, lather  
in the daylight,  
swim, a birdbath  
just for me?
Hounds

Today,
sun rays on window
panes,

A warm lick
from a humid
dog’s tongue,

Today
holding morning
glory,

dew on
grass where my hand
rests
touching a wet nose,

Today,
a love so strong
the soul is split
in two,
one half
walking on four legs.
I Am an Animal

Coffee, dirty clothes, tj maxx bags
ornamenting the contagious
routine of small town hours.

It is glorious.

The whirling fan strums
and hard working mothers
sit in kiddie pools, drink
margaritas and decide
when to start loving their
daughters, now
that they are no longer
props, ornaments hung
on small town pine.

It is glorious.

I want to go home, I
say. I don’t know where.
As an animal, I feed.
Never kill or be killed.
If someone touched me
it would last forever.
Kodak

It will turn out, the photo
taken with a point-and-shoot,
no screen, only a tiny glass
scope fitted at the center
to see the world through.

But it will turn out.
Even if the sun is harsh
and I opened the back of the camera
too soon to let it in,
staining the underbelly of film.
    Is the original picture still
    alive underneath the exposure?

It would be of a bird dancing
on tree limbs that look
like upright boneage
of feathers, if the feathers are gone
    and there remains a black
    skeleton underneath.

It would be of a head
by a boat railing, laughing
    because the wind spat up water
    in the oversaturated face.

    It will turn out,
    under the soft char
    of pre-development.
Winter Carmine

The cardinal, a miniature

fire hydrant;

in evening his

feathers riot against

snowbanks and cedar fences.

He must know

I'm watching.
Avalanche

On a drive
to Massachusetts, a song
came on the radio. I heard
it before, when
I was younger, probably
in the backseat
of my parent’s car.

It spoke of reflections
seen in snow banks
and the porcelain
faces of mountain
sides. I was passing
a similar one and
began to cry. Might
I have caught a glimpse
of myself?
Sure, it feels right
to be a landslide.

At this ordinary
age of in-betweenness,
I dismantle and build.
I am an impermanent
visitor to myself - I make
her coffee and read her books-
hoping she’ll stay a while.

Though I see, out there
beyond the snow mountains,
she thinks about the other
hours that wait to be used.
She can count
on one hand the places
she's lived. The hand has
five fingers.
The seasons of life
hang as paper on the wall.

Is it time to go?

It is time to go.

She picked up
the record her father
bought for her
at a thrift store.

The song is on

side B.
The Tulip Shell

Within tawny grain,
a scalloped flower
budding where bone meets water,
    how it wrests the dew,
    how it wrests the waves

out from under
    what is the epitome of a beaten life
made beautiful
abridged by an epiphany,
    where an opening hollers
for bystanders -
and I see it
from the inside
out
    the lotus heart
    a spindling crown
    the gum pink paint of skin

the brown speckled fudge casing -
wrestling inside
one another
for a final attempt

to save itself.

Now drying
in the summer sun, displayed
on my shelf,
in the bedroom, nestled
in the farmhouse
    in Augusta.
Remembering that Saturday
right before Sunday came
with its ants and nats, squashed
and curled up on an orange peel
semi-sweet, sour
to match
the drool in our bed
just enough to be smelled
through the hall
and down the stairs
so they all know
we’ve gone bad.
Side Notes

Within this most likely
day, I ask myself
if there will be another.

If there shall, an animal
will die and another born,
licked like fruit by the mother.

An orange will age
a single day, maybe enough
to soil or ripen sweeter.

Heat will prune
the yarrows, opening
them wide, wilted down
to a grim yellow, butter.

If you are not here
to see it with me, then
I will be the sun, moving

someplace else – to where
you are – spitting at the dark,
I’m over here now, clever.

I will sleep
by your neck
and whisper what
this day brought
us, a giver.
On a least likely
day, you’ll be the scent
of absentee bone
and flesh, a small
cloud of infinite
time, a taker.
Tuck Everlasting

1.
Wild toad crossing
the threshold of pastoral forest
and sward, tucked neatly
against the ferric stakes
where a girl rests
on both elbows, the croaks
and thyme skin, she watches
before asking the creature

if she can come with.

2.
Water, tender on his back
of course you should live
without penalty or end
in this great expanse.

You loved it more,
with your chromatic
belly and gullet cicada
noise, that sounds
like a swarm of honeybees
when their hive has been knocked down.

Toad, you waddle in
the boundless
murmuring through
your artichoke cells

you don’t have to live forever
you just have to live.
Tremors in the Afterlife

*I want to do with you what spring does to cherry trees.*

Pablo Neruda

The curtain capers.
The dog gambols
over wide beds
of wildflowers.
The cherry trees
grow eyes and watch
through pink. I cannot
be all pink, except
for right now, at the mercy
of their petals.
They move the same way
as the curtain, a flower.
The dog, a horse.
The cherry tree, such
a naive creature. Unaware
of what will be taken
when spring is gone.
Let, the branches say,
each movement
be a little death.
    Now, ecstasy blossoms.
The setting luster
    rouches the sky
into pleats of periwinkle.

The bed is bare. I think
of the romantic sepia
insides of laundromats,
forests, and guardrails.
They are made ugly
by ocean fronts,
Victorians,
and highways at night.

The bed is bare
because I am out
in the garden, with
the dog. Her tongue
is a taffy strip
of pink. My face
is hot, like it is during
summer. I am lying
on my back, watching
dandelion pulp flit above.