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Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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for the intruder in my home

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for the intruder in my home

a Senior Project submitted to

The Division of Languages and Literature at Bard College

by Bennett Chinsena

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

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To Bard, for teaching me more about myself and the world around me.

To Thailand, for ข้าวเหนียวมะม่วง.

My life

in the leaves and on water

My mother and I

born

in swale and swamp and sworn

to water

- Lorine Niedecker

Table of Contents

for the intruder in my home	3
for the intruder in my home	5
have you ever tried writing with a ballpoint pen?	6
fluent	7
stare	8
agave	9
revision	10
synthesis	11
twilight comes swift	12
mitosis at midnight	13
and now to present the community award to:	14
I know it's not your fault but	15
stippling	16
and what of compromise?	17
intermission	19
1/3	21
2/3	22
3/3	23
sweet unrest in baton rouge	25
to start at square one	27
out-of-town	28

sincere	29
tiffany's	30
blessed	31
tall tales stand short	32
I don't hear an accent	33
tide	34
on the tip of an aster	35
?	36
this handkerchief on mulholland dr	37
diaspora	38
I saw your exhibit last Sunday	39
nnn	40
you hate me not	41
scones for a few	42
[untitled]	43
in a mitsubishi	44
creviced	45
marketplace in Yonkers	46
emphasis	47
cognizant	48
name on the coliseum	49
ode to Morgana	50
sorry I startled you turning the corner	51

for the intruder in my home



for the intruder in my home

hand rubs and chamomile tea

if you stay up past dawn
tuck in your self-impressions

sawdust and
periwinkle under fingernails

your perfect image
churned, fermented

have you ever tried writing with a ballpoint pen?

sandpaper on sandpaper
all you do is
scrape and categorize
you don't know your neighbor's name

sandals on concrete
socks on hardwood
risk of falling makes me
walk barefoot

calloused soles
on linoleum
paint my timid
footprints

buy pre-sliced meat
with no effort
instant coffee
with no effort

i watch you
wash your hands in my
earl grey

fluent

azure lines the ceiling
piercing through a concrete canvas
lost on marked trails
dust spins off their cleats like tie-dye

keep the salt close to the heart
wet napkins under soft drinks
kaleidoscope dreams of square plates
and cups of small talk

bathing by the riverbank
oxfords stained by runoff
only copper on copperheads

water lilies watered strictly
grown without regard
sold without petals

stare

breath reads like braille

tetanus shots

and whispers of verbatim

memory met with residual feeling

untuned lackadaisical stone

pebble of knowledge

in resolute rivers

can't pinpoint fault

agave

in the whistle of the nose of the totem
i can hear the scarred sparrow
whose wings ache from the weight of our problems
tattered and bruised by trees too tall

in the crescent of the nose of the dawn
i can taste the peaceful victory of
a sunset tinted spectacles cannot hide from
and they cannot paint for me

in the bruise of the crevice of the arm
i can smell patience, reservoirs waiting
to overflow, effort wasted on weed picking,
the gardening of the American dreamer

in the arch of the dimples in your back
i see the futures of our children

in the space of the smile of your love
time is viscous

revision

should i speak of the cauliflower
fed to me on this day by my ancestors
if your loving walks by short rivers

if time is of the essence
why argue in person

i remember to bathe
in scarce water and cut hair

if drywall breaks like promises
and home for dinner
means it's in the fridge

or dinner is dry
and time overweight,
should we risk for reward if it is fed to us?

synthesis

crackling is not anguish

it is natural

lack of solar rays that is natural

true pigments show

dry leaves heave a

sigh heard once or twice

it gets worn out

stems get bloated

strides of simple actions

are lost in the rain

are caught in the puddle

mistaken intimacy

twilight comes swift

when eyed for long

when riverbed is twin-sized
and the rain can't fit
and the snow falls dry

petals of flower
overtake the precipitation

peacocks lose color
when mud marks boots
when autumn strikes colors on wall

on the fifth day
feels like the hundredth

when affection is trite
and warm hugs minced

this change awaits the

fumes that release
from augmented certainties,

from the trust-encrusted delicacy of
the definite

redefine hesitation,
all is remedial
all is memorial

mitosis at midnight

vision and compassion can
spot unshallow shrapnel

knee-deep
in recovery,
bone-deep wounds
washed in shallow rivers
running from oceans of contempt,

decreed in sorrow
you are the despot now
crescent of your moonlight
you cut your leg from this rift

and now to present the community award to:

rhythm of hiccups

on my awning

a room filled with

suspenseless conversation

labeled friendship

daily routine becomes riddle

would rather be eating poutine in Ontario

or camel-backing in Vegas

stuck in the chair

waiting for electricity

to singe my last nerves

one in the axon

firing my last dendrite

leave the Oolong undrunk

I know it's not your fault but

left me deserted with cacti to kiss
you speak creole to foreigners

paid \$30 in tolls
drove lightyears from parents

eat tums no meals
strip sense from self

mongrel passion
carve feel in flesh

stippling

another taste of mercury won't quench my thirst
what does the luster of a precious stone matter if it breaks skin
if you hold too tight
what if the mic drop leaves the worst unsaid

and what of compromise?

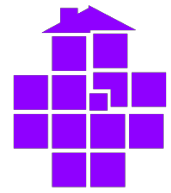
forgiveness is the release of funds into your bank account

braised in shallow oils

bathed in bad luck brews

the marketing professional goes door to door just to deal with it

intermission



1/3

hitting licks on the 14th floor
abandoned buildings never felt so at home

we could spot the lynx tying his shoe in the garden adjacent
weathering the tiles with his knuckles
dipping his claws in concrete to scrape

chiasmus in the mountains
early morning coffee for more fuel birds
burning out like fireworks in summer tradition

2/3

honey brine pucker pie

sour dessert torture

dipped in river Styx fondue

eating your bag of bones

package me in Hostess wrap

preserve our ties

dunk me in brine

fermented ice cream on a hot Wednesday

3/3

at dusk we're forced to talk

w glasses of cerulean
doubt watered down
by hollow time

wrapped by feeble hands
read my magnum opus
emails on a whim

outside the mausoleum
i post my suggestions

sweet unrest in baton rouge



to start at square one

coated in the bleakest lining — dug out of our gelato — craters in a mess of anguish and turmoil
there she was — unmasked and uncovered by space debris uninterested in the craft but more so
in the product — more so in what he could get and thought less of what she had left, what he
had taken, time spent in a vacuum, dilated in a melting rush of delusion — swarmed by sound
of hope and lack of initiative — the oars wore down / the mast termite-ridden / the compass
fidgety — essence of a man dismantled — ideal becomes illogical becomes over — banality of
deception — lack of concern makes for a temple left in rubble

out-of-town

moth in the rear view mirror

flutter

waning

in light coat of toxins

diet of daisies and cobblestone

growing in cracked principle

pressed in drying asphalt

kneel on ground zero

for businessmen who died for our sins

and the fees and taxes saved us

sincere

What hasn't been said is lost in cursive, scissored into nylon cloth of ribbon-tied trinkets and things to bring back to close friends from far away. The snow-capped mountains, too familiar, too blinding. The envelope too perfectly sealed, left unread, its edges too sharp to hold.

tiffany's

scarlet-covered syringe make it known
— crept up onto you like breakfast in
bed — crepes crept up, skillet wrapped
in velvet gnawed into with veneers —
my mannerisms appraised

blessed

and tucked away are lynx-buried /
instinct-driven truths, unrestrainable -
isms, blaming the victim wrapped in
gauze, wrapped in sleek satin
antidepressant, draped in blanket of
education, cloaked in care, the activist
picks up altruism

tall tales stand short

overlooked by engrained
encouragement, influence of therapeutic
promises of self-help written by selves
themselves — souls sold for less-than
stellar salaries, packed in suitcases
checked-in for connecting flights to
familiar terrain, adjacent valleys just out
of reach of foreigners and financial
institutions string-up houses like
sausages in a slow-cook suburbia
furnace — breeding ground for high
populations and low expectations and
big dreams in small towns with big
backyards and low ceilings made of
glass, made to break through with cloth
wrapped around fist

I don't hear an accent

doggy-paddled through River Styx
backpacked through Adirondacks,
feet unscathed, forehead untanned,
hoodie tied around organs —
time wasted, peace of mind at the peak.

hands washed in running river,
fingernails trimmed by granite,
granite made countertop —

peace made worry. faith in sediment.
compromise over displaced metamorphic
foot stuck in faults. calves cramped in crevices.

I look up to natural phenomena and
jersey numbers I refuse to retire or respect.

tide

surface tension breeds

troubled waters

lost in marsh

in wicked soot

in darkness comes too soon

over amethyst crack rocks

psyches shaped

in minefields over

rushed metropolis

ether cultivation in

troubled waters

untrimmed elm tree in

troubled waters

rubble turned skin

rust turned pale

on the tip of an aster

I found perennial vision
a will to move on grew oars on my forearms
my hunger made urgent

vision obsolete
I wrestle
I hear its whistle through the temple

unkempt for decades
my village forgets tradition
my respect wrinkles

peers speak to me in centigrade
I mourn for lost literature

?

drenched in sweat my dahlia grows
in pent-up rage her petals ache

I am the weeds beside her
the ache in the gardener's arms

the roots are my patience
dug deep in your soil

this handkerchief on mulholland dr

seering yet soft
laced, lacquered, locked in place,
pavement met with steps

resonate from oblique square
strained with grace

persian patterns built for
legacy cut short by bustle
and feeble feet

diaspora

stretched taut in Siam

our bodies, letters in Sanskrit

valet my stress

I saw your exhibit last Sunday

or was it the glimmer on soju-glazed
countertop? Sure you remember the tongue-tied
fishing trips but how about the Uber ride you
forgot to Venmo me for? Or the fact that we
never finished Orange is the New Black before
the olives went bad. I told you to refrigerate
salsa after opening it but you just looked at me
like you do when I'm dragging things out and I
get that we were raised different — it was only a
matter of time before apartments smaller than
dorm rooms

nnn

to earn my allowance for the week
drowsy pillars of principle

gutter filled with squid and trout
grooming under leaky awning

you hate me not

I pressed against
cinder-block spongy and porous
until my tomb spilled out

my severances, burrowing under soil and seed,
scuffling with soot under ash-filled air
heaving and retching for reimbursement

ego lies around
rummaging through sand
beachside,

scones for a few

under my breath
in quiet but confident

an utterance of sincerity
and certain knowledge

whisked breath at potluck

should I tip this time?

[untitled]

sleek azalea on a bough

flail me

trapeze my attention

this mildew night

in a mitsubishi

shower in kerosene
porcelain palms break
promises

left your plasma
left your pendant
in orbit round your loneliness

creviced

typhoon hug me tight

whisk me

Margiela-laced toes

elated by tension

beckon in closet

irate in shower

distorted comfort

dormant infant inched

marketplace in Yonkers

content in no man's land

my hometown coos

cops shake my hand

mutilate

emphasis

wind blows without atmosphere

around here

mouth shut and hand slit

“who’s going home

For Easter”

relics of sound logic

usual monotone

reference to typical in atypical tone

criticism

of monarch butterflies

cognizant

strafe from tired ends

cut ladders in my forearms

borders in Burma

made stateless

name on the coliseum

runny ink on statements signed in rain,
silk road led me to you

desert island patience
for a glimmer of god

tentacle-built foundation
pagans will mock us

fans of fate
I watch wiping blood from nose

ode to Morgana

your arms are really heavy on my stomach
you can sit on my thighs

head in the wasteland
eating bleach-dipped chicken

persian rugs wrapped deformities
paint our nails in pyrite

needle, my ladybird
into my flesh paint a priceless form

not too generic
like photos with backdrops

take one sideways
mid-blink
with my feet cropped out
with my friends cropped out

sorry I startled you turning the corner

stabbed you with chopsticks
and spewed tar in your eyes

curried baking soda and chicken
so the smell would not offend you

wipe your oxfords dry
before entering my temple

you drip of wines i can't pronounce
and reruns on TV land

of mice wine and men
don't say i love you

cartilage pierced for salvation
floating market through swamp

admit to watching westworld once
and burrowing to keith ape

borrow from me and never reimburse
I swear I dream in English

use your language on my tombstone