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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

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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



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**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

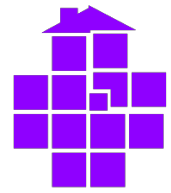
bathed in bad luck brews

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