

Provincial

Time and tide wait for no man - Geoffrey Chaucer

It's always the same
No breeze from the plains or quake from the faults can perturb
A shadowed land covered by a dome of tulips
That do nothing but twinkle in May's rays
And wilt when the townspeople
Say so

I danced my final glissade there in perpetual motion
Asking for the exit sign never was palpable
For that place is sterling silver
Never tainted by rusty tears that I alone bled
Plenty a time

When I skate back
Often amidst the frozen tundra
Suffocating the tulips - governed by hospitality
The world's spin slows
And I fall under the small town's spell
That drifts across our sleeping heads
As often as the freight train forges a lonely route
over Douglas Ave

Though I quite like it at first
There's a soft ease to the town's ebb and flow
Each car houses a doe-eyed Jack and Jill
With qualms that nibble rather than bite

Eventually when I awake in a new land
Buzzing with bona fide as sharp as daggers
That cut freshly grown tulips without a blink of an eye
A jolting clarity to observe what a waste 18 years was
In a town with not a gust in sight.

Fire

I think the conductor held the finale a smidgen too long that evening
Just 10 years of age in a midwestern freeze
With both a rose and a thorn for the violin and a prayer that maybe something bad would
happen
So I wouldn't have to go to school

And face those with thin, white moms and dads adorned in cap-and-gown

My parents grew weary as the night played out
Glee didn't dance across their eyes often
Or maybe they were just fine

They were hurt before and saw each other's scars for what they were
With no intentions of repair
Because doing so would've torn them apart

Dad parked in the driveway
And opened the front door
Only to shake hands with a messenger of smoke
Giving a dreary speech, introducing him to his new life

Nowadays when I see red, white and blue
I don't hear sirens signaling Americana
Instead a raw numbness spreads over my toes
Because I sat for hours in that backseat
Waiting for the firemen to finally disappear
Only for the the neighbors to pry a little too deep
As an excuse to turn their microscopes at our charred brown house
In God's name

Dad told me that evening
In the parking lot of Walmart
As mom grabbed food and cloth
That I will always remember that night

He didn't tell me that he would forget how to smile

He shed no tears in that hotel room
I hoped to one day catch him crying
So he could say there's no shame in heartbreak
That strength emerges from burning floorboards
And that men can be vulnerable too

He coated all notions of sentiment in concrete casing, airing his woes through smoldering
flames

When I was 18 he finally wept
By then it was too late.

Lights

I was a mess - it was ten minutes after a quarter to noon
Every traffic light blinks red
When the taxi driver holds no respect for the passage of time
Tap, tap, tappity tap
I like to play footsies
With the back of his seat

Again I am stuck
In the rush of the city whose breeze never halts
From the stretching lake that bleeds into sandy dunes
The other side where I remember my first car
It actually wasn't mine, it was that of my mother's
Who never knew when the right time was to fix the hubcaps
On the right two wheels

Yellow, blinking stop lights were in no panic
To slow the tires on that blue Toyota
In hopes of resting the head of a teenager on a musty desk
In that small town, my watch never did stop ticking
before the bell

I think if I had respected time's rules before
And revered the string of indicators
They would have honored me when I gave you my last promise
That I will be quicker to change

That fall evening you never once tapped the breaks
Sighing with remorse
You asked why there was so much pain
In the air we breathed

I should've answered with a slight of hand
A reference to the intricacies of love and
An allusion to how the clock's hands didn't align for us that night
Though your tears already knew that
when you decided to leave me standing
Alone in the chilled, empty framework of moonlight

I couldn't help but notice
behind your shuddering breaths, floating in midair -

That the traffic lights were green.
all the way home.