

For the Eulogy

When writing your eulogy
for the desecrated world,
remember the healthy flesh
around the wound.

Record how at the end of the greyest day,
the sun does not go quietly,
bursting against each cloud,
then mention the moon tracing
her arc through darkness,
coming to rest at an easy angle
over the hill's shoulder.

And yes, cement has flattened grasses
and held its hands over Earth's mouth,
but you learned to read using street signs
you followed to a peak, then watched
someone turn their light on 6 miles away.
You saw the Bay spread out in front of you
and for a moment, thought

all this, for me?

And though you can see the stacks
rising from the refinery
and there is broken glass embedded in the dirt around you,
do not let this swell in your throat;
so when you drive home through fog so
thick you can barely see,
marvel at how all around you,
it has made light corporeal.

I Don't Know What to Do with My Hands

I keep seeing the hummingbird
just beyond my window.

I keep spending long nights
fumbling my way along the wall
in search of the switch that will
restore the color in my cheeks.

I keep protecting myself against
the viscous air, my own breath
hot against my face.

I keep knitting a rectangle
only to unravel it
though I keep knitting it again
and I keep burning my hands
with hot oil splashing from the stove
and I keep placing glasses on the table
and trusting them not to fall or shatter
but somehow

I keep pulling shards out of my feet
and I keep apologizing without meaning it
or meaning it without apologizing
and I keep wondering if I opened my mouth
would I be able to speak?
and I'm getting lost in all of this space
and will someone please
tell me what to do with my hands.

Sleeping in a New Place

For a week now,
I've been sleeping in a bed that is not yet mine,
my limbs still arranged
as though you are there beside me.

I am paralyzed,
your absence an icicle
inserted between my ribs
and melting away,
leaving my body opened.

Viscosity

We sat outside, skin blazing with mid-July. I watched my grandfather squeeze sunscreen into his hands. “Do you know what viscosity means?” he asked. I, being about six, did not know. “Viscosity is how thick or thin a liquid is, how easily it flows. If something is very viscous, it is hard to stir.” I pondered this as he set the bottle in the sun. He later picked it up and poured some into my hands, covering them easily with slick white warmth. “Does the sunscreen have more or less viscosity than before?” I paused awhile then answered “yes?” His eyes twinkled and creased in response. For the rest of the week he asked me about viscosity-- of juice, of honey, of glue. I’ve learned a lot about thickness; that tears are more viscous than laughter, that the sky grows thicker after nightdrop, the moon a stray eyelash on its bruised cheek. I know that goodbye will always be more viscous than hello, that lonely feels thicker than together. Some things just must be left in the sun to warm a while, though not all things will thaw. This, I know.

For a Little While

after "You Can't Have it All" by Barbara Ras

You can have many things,
but not all at once and
just for a little while.

You can have movement, the pull of muscles
against bones, against the inward crush of gravity,
you can run until you breathe fire
and drive until the road is marked by your acceleration.

You can have infatuation, desire for oneness
leaping hot into your throat,
eyes wide against night, skin tingling where touched.

You can have heartbreak, each half expanding
in your chest, tears paving roads
away from your eyes.

You can have sunsets, but never the same one twice.

You can peel an orange and imagine for a second
that you are also telling your body "open."

You can have a child, teach them everything you know
with their chubby hand clutching your finger, but know that
they will likely forget half of it and go away one day.

You can have bluebirds in the garden but seldom on your shoulders,
you can have flowers but I promise each one will wilt.

You can be alive, you can glow, you can strain,
but know that someday you will lessen.

Death, in many ways, is just
reaching equilibrium
between having and losing.