

My Humanity is Boiling Over

My skin turns soggy from sitting too long in a childhood bedroom where the air is damp with sorrow. Sometimes screams sit in front of me in the air until I wring them out and drink back up what I tried to expel.

I used to be a sleepwalker when I was a child. I would roam the halls and sputter nonsense and wake up none the wiser. Now I struggle to close my eyes in that same twin bed. I swear I hear the slumbering footsteps of a child looking for something in the hall, glazed eyes sweeping every corner before they fall on a body that's too big for their bed and wonder what nightmare could have brought this version of themselves to be. And it's impossible to sleep when I can feel my own scathing gaze finding me as a warning, my childhood dancing on the baseboards running from the fate that I have found. The golden age of my life surrounds me in the slivers of light and peers curiously into the void on the bed.

And I try to sleep with such ferocity it breaks the barrier. Every moment in time is all at once and all here, crowding the air in the too small bedroom. And maybe, just maybe, I can sleep so deeply that I can walk again; into the air, into the time, into my past. Maybe I can dream just enough to undo what has been done and sweep away the sorrow that has collected like dust on my bones. I could lumber lazily through the halls and find other walkers with glazed eyes and supple skin and walk with them until I wake up pure again.

And then I am the nightmare that has stolen my own youth. I track down spirits in hazy hallways to rectify my mistakes; steal their passion and their innocence and their potential and throw it all at a broken shell of a person where life just falls through the cracks. I dream so viciously I see myself disintegrate into mist that drenches the house and turns to sorrow, sorrow that steeps through the night and chokes me when I wake.

Pears

My sisters and I used to pick pears in my grandmother's yard
I would choose the rotten ones from the ground
Push my greedy little fingers into their soft flesh until they disintegrated in my hands
I would take to her raspberry bushes next
Scratch my meaty hands on the prickles
To mix my red with that of the berries
Sticky little hands covered in pear and raspberry and blood and dirt
And I would lick it all off till I became a woman

My Corner Store's Lineage

My mother used to disappear around 1 am every night
I'd see her hunched over the counter of a gas station tucked in the backroads of my country town
Pointing at the looming case behind the teenage cashier, making wrinkles making out the prices
She'd drum acrylic nails surrounded by sagging skin on the laminate
Pat the concealer under her eyes while narrowly avoiding her crusted eyelashes
Let out a soft heavy sigh as her total was read

And I stood in the dark parking lot, the neon of the gas pumps lighting my face from one side
Digging a nail under the flap of the box I'd drug myself from the house to get
And my feet felt the ground all too much
My forearm gripped by my grandmother and my mother's hands
Pressing their wizened fingers into my tender flesh and telling me never to get old
Not to live too much
It would take the life out of you

The grit of the curb would rough itself along my youth as I wondered who I was
Not my mother sound asleep with chamomile tea and a tub of vicks
Nor my grandmother with years of work along her hands and her face
Nor any of the things I knew I should be
I was a debutante at a corner store whose skin sagged around her bones

Eighteen

I was eighteen and my mind was full of pus
And I blow dried my hair everyday to make it more brittle
Every night I'd put two pills between my fingers before inserting them straight to my large
intestine
And I'd dream of the boy I didn't love on pillowcases I hadn't washed in weeks

I was eighteen and there were bugs in my body that crawled out my eyes
My nails filled up with blood and were ready to burst
I stuffed my drawers with crumpled papers and taped them shut
I killed a bird and watched it decay in my closet

I was eighteen and covered in slime from the egg
And my skin was peeling off
I had to eat my fingers just to stay alive
But I think I died

At eighteen

Life is Aflame

How do you know if a life is lived?

Or rather how do you live instead of wondering whether or not you're living?

I have a wick inside of me that burns but does not glow

That runs along my veins and reaches down to my feet

Burning, tracing, running, disappearing through my body looking for the end

Sometimes the burn of my blood scorches the earth where I stay for too long

I feel the sun on my face but know it is not mutual

The sun cannot tell it has given something life when it touches me

It goes ashen as if it has fallen on the pavement