

Anesthesia

Let me sing you a lullaby,
restless one, for I know
it's not insomnia that
keeps you staring at dark ceilings.

Listen to my melody
and I swear, if you listen close enough,
you'll recognize the tune.

See, it's the chant of the broken,
the marathon runner,
halfway there.

“Oh Lord, keep me strong, keep me strong”

It wasn't always to God,
but it was always muttered quiet enough
that only He could hear it.

Oh I know that you won't sleep tonight.
You have no bed to sleep on
and these sheets don't feel like yours yet.

But give it time.
Count backwards from thirty.

Anesthesia calls.

This Way

You know he wasn't always this way.

See, he used to be
New Hampshire summers
spent lounging on hammock
outside grandma's Bear Island cottage.

Used to be that scrawny smiling kid
laughing because he can't
stand up on water skis
but who cares?

Because time doesn't move here
so he doesn't have to return for dinner
until infinity grows tired,
and his legs always grow tired first.

See, New Hampshire summers
weren't an escape, they were a constant
he carried with him even when
the Chicago cold watered his eyes
like old man caring for garden,
like old man protecting all he has left.

He swears:

He wasn't always this way.

He no longer is the scrawny kid.
But while his muscles grew bigger
his resolve grew weaker.

When night falls he gasps and sucks in weed smoke.
He can never get enough oxygen anyway,
so maybe tonight he'll breathe easy for the first time.
Maybe tonight he won't hyperventilate himself to sleep.

And when he wakes up he drips remains of flask
from night before into coffee
because he isn't really sure he wants to wake up all the way.

At least not yet.
Maybe not ever.

He wasn't always this way.

He looked through his photos yesterday
where among others
New Hampshire hibernated.

God, how could he have been so naive?
So stupid? So hopeful? So trusting?
So happy?

God knows, heaven help him,
he prays for forgiveness so often
he almost forgets he has never been inside a church.

And when he was young a girl called him Godless.

She said he was destined for hell.
He didn't really know what that meant then,
but he is starting to.

And when he was older a girl called him wolf.

She said he stalked her.
Took her faith
and left her nothing.

He didn't think much of it then.
But she is no longer the only
one to reference the emptiness left
in his wake.

And at night his father would tell him:

Don't worship at the house of pain.
But to be honest, he prays there everyday.
He prays he wasn't preying on lost girls,
consuming till he was full.

Because if that's true:

Why does he still feel so damn hungry?

He wasn't always this way.

But that's okay.

Because New Hampshire

got cold at night,

had egg-tasting water,

and sharp beach rocks that would look inside your soles,

and grandma who would look inside your soul,

and hammock broke, and one time he stole

an arrow, and tortured a spider, and the toilets didn't flush, and

New Hampshire cried at night for forgiveness.

It was always this way,

he just forgot.

Fever Dreams

Fever dreams take me home
to when Momma didn't cry so much.
Poppa wasn't furious so much.
Sister's eyes didn't seem empty so much.

Fever dreams bring me hope,
that dreamer's opiate,
a sullen ship's captain
across ocean wide.
Infinite.
So we stay docked ashore.

When sweat drips down
my burning brow
and chills chain me to sheets
and consciousness is fleeting

I smile.

For maybe fever dreams
will be hospitable.
Let me stay the night.
Keep me close.

Bring me meals of
delusions that seem real,
well, real enough.

Come Midnight

Come midnight, I'll come to you
hands tucked in pocket
like guns holstered in old west.

Come midnight, I'll stand at your doorstep
I won't ring the bell though
You saw me walk up from your window.

Come midnight, you'll ask for forgiveness,
And I'll give it, but I'll ask you to treat it gingerly.
I have already given you everything and it's all I have left.

Come midnight, we'll watch our house burn.
We'll run into woods bare souls and feet.
Our past, our heathen, let's watch it light up the night sky.

Can we make a life here? I'll ask.
If we sleep on soil, will you finally be planted?
Will your roots grow deep?
Intertwined with mine, to blossom, to grow?

I know it's unfair to ask, but, this once,
will you deny the bees and hide your nectar
where only I can see?

I guess what I am asking is
if we sleep here,

Come morning, will you still be sleeping next to me?