

Once At The Halloween Party

This hole in my chest
is filled with dove's feathers.
For Halloween last year
I took all of the feathers out
and glued them to my arms
to make wings. It didn't work.
There were other failed birds
at the party, some with beaks
glued to their faces, some
with bird legs glued to their
real legs, but none was successful.
We were all just people
with holes in our chests
and not enough bird parts
to be convincing.

When we met, you had
a piece of glass over
the hole in your chest
painted like the Dolomites.
I asked if you'd painted it
yourself and made a joke
about flying a message into it.
Neither of us got it,
but we laughed.

Days later we were
lying in the molted leaves
watching a sheet of clouds
swallow up everything.
Some of my feathers were
still glued to my arms,
but the window in your
chest was replaced by a hole
filled with lungs and ribs
and skin. It was then I
uncovered the mystery:
that you had always been a hiding
place for the unsuccessful birds,
and that I had always been a message
tied too tightly to myself.

The Birds That Weigh Me Down

At a certain point the ocean
peels itself from the wet
sand of a beach.

You are there in the cold
to watch it, to sink
your toes in,
to leave details
concerning the weight
of the birds on your shoulders
and how their tiny heartbeats
constantly remind you how
old you will become.

Water is like that, you know,
giving us new things upon
which to write the old
ones that we find so worrisome.

Nothing to it.

You can guess
at these things,
the weight of the ghosts
that you follow,
the tiny heartbeats they carry,
but will always want
for a rectitude had
only by the water,
reading and erasing,
our skin and bones
worn into layers
indistinguishable from
this distance.

How high we've gotten
by carrying these birds so long,
their counting heartbeats,
only to become shadows
on the beach somewhere
waiting to fall,
an accumulating rain.

It is precisely then
we discover we are
doomed to be the ocean.

It is precisely then
we understand.

The Pond

These days no one
appreciates the moon
anymore, how it
says your name right
before you fall asleep,
how it gives your mother
flowers at your dad's funeral.
No one has time
to see their faces in the pond.

Are You Hearing Me, Alice?

That magnetic field
has been above
the garage all day
wringing the neighborhood
sounds into a knot.
My stomach feels a bit
queasy watching it pulse
and turn in on itself,
a giant seamless bundle
of notes twisting all
of our words from existence,
turning us all into babies.

I've never know what
to say to you, Alice.
And now that we are
babies I'm beginning
to think these talks
of ours are disordered
and too far. You say
that the atmosphere
has grown tiresome,
and I don't know
how but I agree.
Can't do anything else.

The magnetic field becomes
a swarm of hummingbirds
drunk with sounds.
The sounds become unbearable,
a reckoning, all of our selves
coming to fruition.
I become all
that I ever wanted
in a distance,
perfectly stretched
across a hummingbird feather
in a small piece of sky
across the room from you
and I looking out the window.
Alice, I say, are you hearing me?

We Garden, But Only In Seattle

We certainly are not the gardeners
we thought we were.

Carrots were pretty simple, sure,
little darts of sunlight cropping
from the soft soil with just
a couple drops of water and
the rain in fall. And tomatoes,
the tomatoes blushing whole
solar systems into facts to be
plucked and appreciated
and barely a finger lifted
in the tending them.

It was all nothing, a hollow
in the dirt hardly deep enough
to plant oneself, as deep as
the grooves in my palm
you used to follow someplace,
maybe Seattle, moss wicking
up their edges holding in
parentheses the ways to get there.
But here we are with our feet
in the ground and nothing
happening.

Who would've thought?
Here we are completely alone
with our toes curling
anxiously in the clay
unable to distinguish
between it and our bones.

Waiting.

A waiting slowly growing
until there's nothing left
but the direction that time
went and we follow it hungry,
an emptiness blooming,
telling ourselves the birds
will land and that is when
we know it's worked.