

Voices from Eden

Genesis

An ocean stretches, pulsing in the breeze
as sweeping fog throws shadows from the sea.
We wander the grey of beach; your fingers

squeeze my fingers, our edges cold and sharp
and melting, fluid as that place where sand
meets surf, the ebb and flow of tides a kind

of whisper drifting on our skin. Brine dusts
our lips—a savor of our genesis
who thought the earth held promises beyond

the membrane of sea. While seagulls gawk
from cliffs, we walk the curve of wrack line,
toeing streams together with our pants rolled

mid-calf and crouching to touch a crab or rub
the polish of driftwood—imagine
the tumble and abrasion of salt

that smooth jagged edges with the patience
of chitons, their radulae scraping rocks
and tending gardens one diatom at a time.

Water licks our feet, brings the slime of palm
kelp and their bulbs that fit in a slit
of sand and stiff enough to stand

as if a tree, stranded on an island
where we might learn the shape and art
of building worlds with arthritic fingers.

Grandma's Dementia

You don't remember
how we'd play

Scrabble on the floor—
you'd help me

find sense between words
and silence.

We'd laugh at silly nouns
like *twaddle*,

at ticklings on our tongues
and new things

shaped inside our throats.
The world was

a garden of word play
and stones flipped

belly up, but now words are lost
behind your eyes,

gummed in your nerves.
Your brain is

a lit universe
growing dark

gaping large in this zenith
of a life.

Here I am lost in what
I know, what

I think I know, trained
to understand

the suicide of your mind
as it drowns.

The yellow wall behind you is
dim, absorbs

light, echoes shadow
on your skin—

shimmering thoughts
shift to grey

tangles and crooked fingers
in a glove.

Your voice is empty of verbs
and your nouns—

mostly your lips remind me
of a fish,

the way they open,
the way they

close, soundless as
memory.

Do you remember when you
locked the door

and left without a word to walk
past headstones,

the way unfamiliar, lined with tulips
and cut grass?

I searched for you then—
I search now,

invoke your name to remember
that symbol

of character worn out
after all

the years. This is a genesis
of thought, time—

a wandering for meaning. Here,
denouement

is defined by its absence
and longing—

I only learn what
waning is

when memories break like
fraying strings.

The space between words

lingers on your tongue till it rubs your teeth
burns like cinnamon

breathes the difference
 between drowning and song

glows dark as atoms
 as planets spinning round stars

draws a shadow edge spilling
 across sandstone

moves with you like a beehive
 like a wasp plucking a spider

stings as the jellyfish
 behind your knees

winks

moans

stifles a sneeze

opens a glimpse of infinity stretching
 like string, the bond between
 ideas, the strand of
 a moment, the stuff
 of thought

yawns wide as eternity

Ode to Darwin

Don't you see, Darwin—

there's no going back.

Not once you sketch your beaks

in your books and write

how each wing branches

from the tree of life. Your words

stick, a web that ties me

to a fruit fly, a witness

of primordial origins.

But do you feel it, Charles?

The yearning still to be

more than genus and species

anatomized in a laboratory

with magnifying glasses?

We see the world through a smoke,

where brains decompose, where

death breeds life, where hearts tick

and wet lungs fill as if by chance.

But surely you see that breathing

is more subtle than living.

The truths you speak hide

like moths against black bark,

edges blurred by squinting eyes.

Through a glass, we see veins

of earth, ourselves, everything—

we look to the stars

and wonder where our thoughts fit

in this story you tell.

Tell me honestly—do you feel

a kinship with those distant lights, too?

Because we both know, unreachable

as they are, we are made

of those same atoms our ancestors

called the gods.

Golden Silk Orb Weaver

The bridge is heavy
with fog's dim grey,
so dark I almost miss
the blink of a spider splayed
like many fingers,
as if thrumming those strands
dripping with morning is enough
to call the world a home.