

PACKING AND UNPACKING FOREVER

uprooted frequently, familiar was
the smell of cardboard and defrost,
cigarette ash in strewn-about coke cans,
papers, stapled wings, on the doors.

the hall slowly piles up and empties,
ferns wilting by the window of my college
apartment, a museum of my small life
stuffed into banker boxes again.

move to the gated community of dreams,
a tiny quad of tiny people in tiny
homes nestled between crawl space and
yearning to make room for more

GOOSE SONG

“What punishments of God are not gifts?” — Stephen Colbert

the copper wire stripped
in the dingy garage,

the geese that took shelter
behind the tall grass,

the candy rain pneumonia
we ingested as children,

sing of plaster, bruises, and glass.

the cicada shells scattered
at the roots of the willow,

the crochet baby blanket
brought places you've slept,

the things we lamented
but learned how to love,

cry for meaning, home, and regret.

5150

Slow, breathe in the stale air
You remember what got you here?
Needles stick all the girls
danced out their skin,
vial collector brimming traces of sap
spewed and crystallized.

And the shoelaces go in the lockers.

Pupils gulp the grapefruit pulp
but the cracks on your wrists
quiet the room.
Listen to the whistles
of the birds behind the splintered pine
asking for God to show the sun.

And you will take two of these nightly from the nurse.

Echoes in the night find you
tucked away under sterile
sheets, follow the light
on the eyes, in the ears, under the tongue
little secret pocketed by your pillow
two dull pearls and an ounce of calm.

PEAR TREE

The heavy fruit that fell
from the pear tree at Cherokee
Path was grainy and sweet
like my clock radio's whispers
from the yellowed window
and reminded me of grandma's
laughter in old photo albums.

I hid my pile of pears in
a bush fort and snuck away
to rifle through the dumpsters
and play in the street.
Marla and her mother lived
in Las Vegas where she would
flip back and forth between
Jeopardy and the Gospels
until they would both die.

MOE'S GARDEN

The best tomato I ever ate was from a garden I built with my grandpa, Bobber.

He lived next door to Moe's Tavern, a bar where local fishermen would thaw after long days of sitting on the ice.

One morning I was caught whittling in the garden by a bar patron and was told to go down to grandpa's shop instead.

The Big Mouth Billy Bass collected dust there in the basement. Tackle box memories like night-crawlers.

Bobber grew too old to keep hopping on the riding lawn mower with me on his lap for rounds of weeding.

We didn't grow flowers but you can't bring tomatoes to a funeral. I read a passage about Zechariah instead.

The garden of what used to be so many vines and fruits growing from the ground where we'd unearth bait.

Now it's paved over with tar for a local bank. They don't know that a child used to run there barefoot in the rows.