

## Beyond, A Police Siren: 4 Poems

“Beyond, A Police Siren”

I lay down on the grass in the backyard  
Quiet.  
(Still.)  
High above, clouds gather and pass by  
Witnesses to the events below.  
Beyond, a police siren.  
The wind slices around blades, turns into bellows.

My concentration is exact; arches and lines fill and dance on canvas.  
Wide.  
(Full.)  
Down the hallway, grandpa’s old light flashes.  
Awake and not awake flickers.  
Across the hill, smoke rises.  
The creak of floorboards becomes familiar.

When the piano strikes just so, the room echoes the harmonics.  
Ping!  
(Ding!)  
Watch, they tell us. Be attentive. Stand upright.  
Sweet fragrances float up to heaven.  
Inside the chamber, pain echo rings.  
The crowds stand in circles and stare: holy leaven.

—  
I cannot tell where the screaming is coming from.  
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If I thought I could help, I—

I can never know where the screaming is coming from.

“18 Year Old, Foot Over Water”

The fountain and the pond  
lay along the path from the Student Union  
to the dorms and the academic buildings—  
lined with bright trees, dappled sidewalks, academic flowers—  
the pool filled with lily pads,  
water bugs, and koi.  
St. Peter’s assurance in mind,  
I stepped to the water,  
intent on walking over it.  
Climbed to the edge of the pool,  
Confident and knowing:  
It would work--for  
no stronger faith could be found  
in the city. I was firm in belief.

I stepped  
—my feet got wet.

But face alight, I knew that I had  
done it—  
I did not sink—really—because I did not falter.  
The lack of miracle was not a problem.  
I faced the unknown and I did not back away.

Years later,  
I walked across the campus on a visit.  
I noticed the trees sagged, leaves fallen amongst autumn breezes,  
sidewalks cracked.  
The pool was still there.

Today, far from campus, and twice the former age,  
I am surrounded by a myriad of water-walkings:  
Ethiopians drumming at midnight on Pascha, dancing, filling the night, despite everything;  
the week without much pain after repeated prayers for my mother;  
the surgeons who worked on my daughter’s heart;  
a friend’s ability to forgive.  
These are miracles. They surround me. They soak me,  
as the water that filled my college freshmen shoes.  
Yet I barely notice them. They are average, they are every-day.  
What I wouldn’t give to be 18 again. Standing on the edge of the fountain,  
foot hovering over the water.

“Spring Training”

Pushing forward

we try it over and over again with different implements.

But nothing gets better. Still mud, still snow, still ice.

Melting through

the permafrost with lasers, chemicals: Life underneath, dormant, still, burned away.

Nothing gets better. Still mud, still ice, still frost.

Falling down

tripping and rolling, breaking a fall, skinned knees.

Nothing gets better. Still frost, still ice, still snow.

Icing over

Tripping, breaking, melting, frosting.

Nothing gets better.

“Moon Theology”

We are reading books,  
and she asks me

Why did this person die?

I'm not sure, I say. Sometimes  
people die.

The realization hits her:

Papa, will you die?

Her voice breaks, lips pout out,  
fear crosses vision.

Yes, I told her, I will die.

But not for a long time. I will be with you  
a long while still.

But, I say,

when people die it's not always sad, because now they will be with God.

She cries again. Will you be with God?

Although I don't know, it's not the time for nuances of Theology.

So I nod. I hope so, yes, I tell her.

Where is God? she asks me.

Everywhere, I tell her. He is everywhere.

But I thought He was in our hearts, she says.

Yes, I say. He is, but He is there, and He is everywhere as well.

He lives in our hearts, and He always is around us and sees us.

Will we ever see God? she asks.

Yes. We see God every time we take communion.

She thinks a bit. Is God on the moon? she asks.

Yes, I say.

This pleases her, and she settles down,  
forgetting for now that her papa will one day die,  
content to know that God is everywhere,  
even on the moon.