

Dear Dad,

Forgive me father, for I haven't thought of you
in some time, though there was a time when

moonlight behind the clouds had your presence
that time was long ago.

Forgive me father, I know you've been
far from here, busy at the newest planet

you care about, where the ones you haven't
let down yet still praise you and your name.

Father forgive me, my prayers weren't
loud enough for you to hear me

unaware of my voice in the crowd of beggars,
undeserving, of all your light hid behind the clouds.

Mundane to the Ground

A burnt smell of motor oil
is just barely noticeable
through the pungent, grassy aroma
as summer
and parts of a broken mower
lie in wait

But the buds
do not wait
though the ground
is old and unforgiving
the grass does
not care
it rises
knowing I employ
the unthinkable
a metal box
a four-stroke
combustion engine
a carbon steel
blade spinning
50 times a second
to cut the grass

Why?

My thought as I stare
into the yard that
no one cares about
ignored by those who drive by
yet I labor over my
empty
sad
green
holocaust
trying to cleanse it
powered by commodity
gasoline and blind
cultural inhibition
I wake up fretting over it
lamenting over
the act of stopping the grass
from being grass

Dear Mom,

How many days has it been?
The mold above the shower head
is blacker where it was
pale and new where it wasn't
is a sign of time passing
but of no real bearing
other than guesswork

How many weeks is it now?
The grass was soft and young
and now it's all gone
shriveled away with the leaves of fall
washed away into brown gutter-mush
a sign of time passing
but the seasons are changing lengths
constantly

You look older
than when I last laid eyes upon you—
looked at you for real
not just a glance as you hurried off
but a truly
present
gaze
into you

You're a busy bee before me
buzzing back and forth
saving lives and
sacrificing her body for
everyone who is either too dumb
or too careless to tend to their own flesh

That is a job that never relents
they roll in like wildflowers
to be poked and prodded with your proboscis
pollinating the bureaucrats
and the cycle of life and death is
mixed in somewhere

To Be Empty and Warm

The frost on the sidewalk glitters loudly
somehow
it is louder than the chimney smoke
that billows out of each passing home

A quiet night
all but for the distant murmur of the interstate
and the hum of the ground beneath my tires
or the occasional, bronchial cough of
some distressed transient
huddled on the patio of some shop
laying on the curb of a sidewalk
gurning, shuffling
withdrawing from the isolation
and the warmth
of its tent and its methadone
emerging
to stand alone
in the middle of the road

It didn't notice me riding by
I could've offered it a smoke
or a buck or two
or someone other than
the voices in its head
to talk to
if it could talk
but the air is too cold and too biting
to stand around and
talk

I too
wandered out here on impulse
and now I'll freeze if I
don't stay moving, so I
write this mess on borrowed time
but it's all
borrowed
isn't it...

Dear Dad,

One day you didn't take me to school
you said, *leave your backpack*
so I did
and I followed you out into the suburban, Cincinnati gray.

The sky was gray
the air
saturated and gray
but that day felt so new to me
even though it had been gray for so many days.

It began to rain as we walked, and you told me
we're playing hookie, another new thing
since I only got out of class if I was sick or in trouble
but there seemed to be no trouble on this day.

It rained more, it poured on me and my shoes
and I kept along right behind you
but you sometimes grabbed my hand tight
to keep me from falling behind in all that gray.

I didn't know where we were going
but then we came upon a swing set and a slide
and you said I could swing
and even though the chains hurt my frigid hands
I swung and I jumped off high, high into the gray.

There was a girl on the slide, older
a teenager maybe, and she asked
what I was doing out of class
and I whispered to her, smiling
I'm playing hookie!
and she turned to you, shouting
YOU'RE A HORRIBLE PERSON!
and I didn't understand
so you took me from the painful swing and the slide
and told me not to tell the others what we were doing.

We walked through more gray
and found a wet, cold bench to sit on
but I didn't mind the wetness and the coldness
because my legs were so tired and wet and cold already.

We walked all day, and I enjoyed that day
you were not a HORRIBLE PERSON
for that day.