

Lost to Time

their first home
in that precreation darkness
that amniotic silence
where so much grows undetected
these children who grew beneath my skin
my body an open door for them to enter the world

we know all along that their first steps
are away from us
that all of childhood hurls
them towards departure
their first words are Mama
but their last words won't be

each took their place among my losses
they left one at a time
she looked so small as she waved
from those concrete university steps
I watched her diminish, shrink
in my rear view mirror
he left with drums and an xbox
piled in the back of an SUV
he didn't wave as I pulled away
I watched his back, his strong forearms
his bony shoulder blades like wings
poking through his t-shirt

I'm left with the afterbirth of stillness
of abandoned empty bedrooms
a house crammed with absence
a one-eyed Panda, a headless Barbie
forgotten in the corner of a closet
one lonely drumstick lies dormant under the bed
silent as a cobweb

I'm still clinging to exits
still looking at closed doors
expecting them to open at any moment

Resurfacing

I promised I would never write
you back into existence.
I thought I buried you a long, long time ago.
Forgive me this perpetual autopsy.

I'm looking to words
to save me or to find me. But the words drown
the writer. And I die a slow death
by pen, when all along it was you I was trying to kill.
So, I will take this desolate
poem and fill it's pockets with stones
like Virginia Woolf
and watch it sink
and watch
me
sink.

I revisited our shipwreck
Yes, again.
I was simply trying to navigate
my way through the debris
family photographs with you always looking away from the camera
a strange, lone earring found in the lint trap of the dryer.
Black lace underwear dripping from our daughter's pinky
like a melting shadow
Please mom, tell me these are yours
they weren't.

this isn't the first time I've buried
myself at sea. All you have to do is stay there. Staying
is something I'm good at. Have I not stayed in the most abysmal
places before? I've felt my bones burrow
themselves into the river bed and the waters seep
inside every window
of me. I've heard floating voices
above the deep call my name. I've grasped
for the surface, only to have sea foam flow
through my fingertips and a fresh wave pull me farther away.

I always resurface.
Eventually I notice pinpricks of light
dancing on the ceiling of the water like tiny stars
and I reach for them
floating upwards

bursting through like a baptism
a pen and seaweed in my clenched fist
and I write you out of existence again

Dark Daisies

she found him sitting in the dark
enclosed by a ring of dismantled daisies
plucking petals and flinging them into the air
You must go on
I can't go on
I'll go on

“What are you doing?”
“Finding out if I'm supposed to stay.”

he handed her the beheaded blossom
its head cocked like its neck had been broken
he stood and brushed discarded pearly pale petals from his lap
and walked further into the darkness
she followed him still clutching the headless stem

“Are you afraid of the dark?”
“Yes.”
“Me too. I'm afraid of the darkness in you.”

he told her a cautionary tale
about a Messiah who comes to the Darkness
and says, *follow me into the light*
and the Darkness
says, *but then I won't exist*

“what does it mean?”
“all you and I ever had in common was our darkness
you are my Eurydice
the one I can't let go of
the one who won't follow me into the light”

stuck in the middle of a myth
afraid of losing our story
so we keep retelling it, but no one is listening anymore
a backward glance
an Orphic gaze

he picked up a new daisy
and plucked
You must
I can't
I'll
Go

Bring My Boy Back Home

(Mama loves her baby, daddy loves you too)

As a toddler he gets up in the morning
And attaches his superman cape to his velcro shoulders
He lines up all his cars in perfect formation
He speaks later than most children,
but when he does it's in full, complete sentences.

(Your lips move, but I can't hear what you're saying)

At six he has an imaginary friend
Who is really a dead girl named Sonia
She tells him he will die before he's an adult
I tell him it's time for Sonia to go away
"But, she's my only friend."

(Have you seen the frightened ones?)

At eight he counts his breaths
he says if he doesn't count his breath
he will forget to breathe and die
I tell him that will never happen
He tells me I made him lose count.
"Are you trying to kill me?"

(I cannot explain, you would not understand)

He says he has no friends at school
But he doesn't need them
He has Jesus
He has a recurring dream that I am lost and he can't find me

(Don't leave me now)

My son worries he has cancer
"Kids die from cancer all the time, you know."
"I know."
He says if he dies he'll get to be with Jesus
"Don't I want him to be with Jesus?"
"Not really. Not now. "

(Mother am I really dying?)

At ten he taps his glass four times before every drink

Two taps of his fork on his plate
He taps the sides of his legs four times, knocks his chest four times,
then under his chin. Then it starts again.
The kids make fun of his constant tapping and bird noises.
I tell him he has great rhythm and put two drumsticks in his hands.

(Mother do you think they'll like this song?)

He plays night and day for five years
The tapping, becomes drumming
And now when people ask what he's doing he tells them he's playing (*Comfortably Numb*) in his head.

(Daddy's flown)

At fourteen his dad teaches him to shave, mow the lawn, make simple repairs then disappears
he pretends for months that he's just on a long trip
even as he watches me pack up his father's belongings
then one day he takes all his pictures out of the family album
and carries them out to the trash

*(leaving just a memory
a snapshot in the family album)*

At fifteen he disappears into the basement
Video games and drums his only company
He says he doesn't need a dad
He has me
And he has Jesus

(How could you go?)

He plays so much he grows callouses on his hands
His dad shows up after three year absence
With a guilt gift
A new set of drums
Then disappears again

(Daddy what else did you leave for me?)

He's 19 now
On his own
Still drumming
He calls his band the 27 club
All his songs are about suicide

He worships Kurt Cobain
In his basement - Courtney Love's face torn apart by darts

(The child is grown, the dream is gone)

I tell him I love him
He doesn't answer
I tell him I'm proud of him
He doesn't answer
I tell him I'll visit soon
He says it's okay I don't need you to
I have Jesus

He still has Jesus
He wishes I still had Jesus

*(You cannot reach me now
No matter how you try)*

I dream he's lost and I can't find him.

(Lyrics by Pink Floyd)

Instructions on How to Be Human

I'm just trying to solve the problem of being human. I thought I'd write an instruction manual on how to put the world back together after it's been destroyed, but I couldn't get past point one. So, I changed it to how to reassemble yourself once you've been dismantled, but the thing is there seems to be missing parts. It's like a jigsaw puzzle I bought for my kids at a garage sale, we didn't know there were missing pieces until we were finished. Half a doll's face missing. It stared at us accusingly with one eye. I have a feeling he has them – my missing pieces I think he shoved them in his back pocket and they're wandering the streets of Seattle.