

Cemented

I pledge allegiance
to the flag
of the United States of
America.
And to the Republic,
for which it stands,
one nation,
under god,
with liberty and justice
for the

criss-cross barefoot skipper
leaning left and right,
white lines blurring to
black,
and brown paper
crinkles;
“to the Republic,”
an anarchist flag
waving
high above
them all.

sitting on the steps,
questions, how
bothersome it is,
crying eager
toothless
tears, and grins
and bandannas,
just for hello,
and a smile
no one stops
and no one pledges
allegiance to the flag
one nation,
sitting beneath the
awning,
yawning, and wondering
about that liberty.

the bus stops, and
off to the sunlight
of broken dreams
United.

questions bother,
and no one,
stands for a worthless
grin,

with a trash can we make
music
next to the oversized water
bottle
and misplaced
drumsticks,

spare the chocolate,
and sprinkles
like chasing the kettle
of rainbow
at the last,
next to a thump thud
and dance,
and leap, and twist,
and flip,
and laugh
to entertain
the cheering, smiling,
empty-lost
crowd all
enjoying the blue, sunny
summer’s god.

I pledge allegiance
to a flag
flapping, twisting, falling,
sometimes at the half-
way point
but only when
I’m sad
for it stands
for us all.

together the cross-bearers
lunge,
and contort their arms,
for a dollar,
or a nickel,
all will buy a beer,
liberty and justice.

grizzly it seems, left
like the wild
grass that lays across
the street
next to the tent,

near the blanket,
and next to the dumpster,

it keeps the warmth,
next to the campfire
that is missing,
taken by a stray cat,
sitting up amongst the
backside
of the cat,
like it carries the cross
under god.

I pledge allegiance, it seems,
to broken streets,
and sidewalk, a pothole,
a possum, some barbed
wire,
and the one dollar tacos
made of fake-
seeming worms
itching to escape
the shell
for which it stands.

I pledge allegiance,
to a gray fog
settling over
the brown,
crinkled, emptied
bag and the next new
question waiting
high up on the step
broken, waiting,
full of liberty
and hardy
justice
for all.

To hold that kettle,
full of gold,
at the end of the rainbow,
hardy justice,
to which I pledge,
keeps the warmth
even as the cold wind
twists, turns,
even as it contorts,
a flag held still
standing, next
to the tent,
next to the cat,
next to the high-tip toe
stairs, next to holding back
cheerful greeting.

But We've Come So Far!

These roads are numbered.
Asphalt rolls and rolls
down a single-digit vein
to a latitudinal end.
Capillaries spring
from tar-sprouted
black leaves rooted,
dropping carbon on leveled
double-digits.
These numbers grow larger
the further you get from home.
The arteries drain the few
drops of black left
in heart
and accelerate them onto
El Camino Real,
beneath the three-digit
illuminating bell.

Dust Bowl

there was a time when men moved with grass out to oklahoma
they followed the winds-from-west
at-whim
they skipped child support and cried out like the cherokee
which they claimed to hold in drops-of-their-white-blood,
but now the plains are still.
earthquakes move the memories along, waving,
creating plates of regret, separated by spaces never filled-with-memory,
a childhood with no father, laced tears
dropping only when men are close enough to the grave.
it's dark-out, dark-in-the-head,
moving tectonic-angry, until mountains are created,
new memories-that-never-were.

now here men are, blood pouring
like rivers from the brain out the eyes
biting the tongue too hard
to make sense of the quiet-in-your-brain
the who-you-once-were
the you
here a shell of a person
dementia-ed,
just the outside parts intact,
forgetting the names and places your body once tree-trunked you to—

who were the children you once left behind in a dust storm?
simply because your eyes were not clear enough,
filled-with-oklahoma-dust and all.

children who now pat your behind when you use the toilet
a number-two-with-a-smile-sometimes-stickers
who open the door when the gosh-darned-knob won't work right
who play along like they are one of the lost-lovers and not-your-child
who pretend that all you made your whole life was sand-castles
and that you placed each of their characters within the moat

these grown children with grown children
pretending that all that hurting you created—
the missing of daddy-daughter days
and the following painful-high-school-dances
their fathered kids had to attend —
the times they pulled to the side of the road, grown-adult,
hoping the recent lapse in memory was not like yours,
not a sign of what-to-come
the day-after-day-after-day they thought you might move west,
one day,
and ask to be forgiven, dropping-to-your-knees in a pool of clear tears,

dust settles when you are old enough.

The Twisted Fates

they were losing oxygen, one more than the other
while they were still not of this world. premie
chef's babies, both perfect, one hurt.
her leg was twisted, and smaller, and thin
her leg was wholesome, and healthy and
unfair.
they grew in the face of their mirror hung over the door
and twin beds side by side and not much
room for walking,
but walls covered in picture perfect frames
taken from mother's work in the hostel
on blindtear strip. the shine hung by girl one,
five minutes older and revered by both,
but followed in the same light
by sister catastrophe. Each day became bleaker
as the other students all looked away
keeping to themselves
but feeling themselves a little more sneakier
eventually good will hugged them all:
don't look at the girl
don't look it is rude
and she knew averted gazes too
but wanted them to look
and talk
just like they did to her sister
just because she didn't have to twist
and she didn't fall down
and lift herself
every time a little bit quicker

This Is Garbage

It's a vision and a fable.

Convince yourself you have the truth.
Only you have it — yours only
Pack it up, round it up, press down
On the top layers
To get to the liquids
The brown stuff
The good stuff that can be spread
Across the floors
Leaking what is yours

Let the liquids drip into the ground
Hole-making by acid,
Cause a stench
Maybe eat a little

Taste it, dip your finger in it —
Make it something only you own.
Hungry people comb through
Blackened banana peels
Shredded credit cards
Crumpled re-writes of the truth
And shattered glass too;

Once you become a gallonated-bag—
Something has to hold the finds,
Febreeze versions recommended,
Once you become the bag—
Inch away from the can that holds you
Move into the corners,
Stretch yourself darker and deeper
A shell for contents
Yours made to tell.

Tie up your ends, make sure contents
Stay tidy and that no raccoons can bite
Or sink their teeth into possessions not theirs

Write it down.
Clean it out.
Make the truth new again.