

Song Cycle

We all know how the story ends,
the seasons rewind and begin again
but we sing to the sky for new rain
as the earth is drenched to the bone
from all the world has ever known.
You ask me why we should sing
the same old tale when the stars
will never move, when the lover
looks behind him only to lose her
before they can see sunshine once more,
and I don't know why except to say
that stories come and fall apart like
dreams, and dreamers are mad
poets in sleep, hoping against hope
that the winds will change in time,
that the force of ink will erase scars
of ages long past. But as I look at
you, the heaving and trembling of
your story so close to mine, tell me
what else is there to know but the
vow that I'll withstand tragedy
for the promise of seeing you
wait for me to sing again. Please,
I need to sing for you again.

sky of silence (The Sister's Poem)

There's a bit of you in me, they say.
The knots in each finger. The dips of our feet.
The hearts betrayed in the same places. But
you turn the sky into pieces caught between
your teeth. Wild birds know how to swirl around
your temper, and all I know is the sky of silence.
If it ever comes crashing, I hope you'll know
how to save me. I hope I'll know how to
save myself, but I spend more time thinking
of the fall than the rise of my body. I don't know
how much fury it takes to destroy a world,
to let its kingdoms and flowers and wars scatter
to the wind once all has been said and done.
But I am learning. I am. I am. There are dead
ends in the cracks of my tongue, the bitter
poetry of it makes offbeat chaos. Voice like a
hollow instrument, made for passing though.
It holds up the sky of silence with a breaking back,
so when I say that this weight won't be enough to hold,
I hope you know it's my way of asking how to be
bigger than a pearl left over from when we still
knew how to breathe without taking anything back.

Snowed Out, Failed In

His mouth hovering above the winter coldness of her back, she wonders when the light went out of the sun.

He became a static tide where she wanted rocky shores. *You can be so cold to me,* he grunts into the darkness afterwards. She rolls over, pretending it is

a black night in December, her cheek warmed by the old young palm with lines that sung an epic poem of something like passion, something about pearls.

She wanted to be right for once in her life, to still look at the clamor of his body and find roses in the thick of brambles. But truth lingers on the back of snowed-in love,

in the question mark that finds its way home after threading a path through the whispering woods.

When it is over, when his breaths even out with the night, she turns to face him and never doubts that her shadow matches his even more than her own.

Lonely Light

I don't want to delve into her body.
I don't want to conquer her sweetness
or scatter marks across the map
of her bare back. I want to make a
shooting star out of this mess,
this nameless stretch as our words
fold and bend against each
other's. She is the loudest color
behind my eyelids, shades of her
fill dark cathedrals and city lights,
the mouths of strangers and
the silence when the crowds
have all gone home. I want to
fold her heart inside my rib cage
and keep it there until the fires
die out, until we are basked in
the setting sun of something
unholy. In this moment
we are on opposite sides of
the same prayer booth, her
confessions clanging through
the dark. Please, I want to
tell her, don't make me go
back to the lonely light.

the war for yearning

I imagine my lover
at the end of the story,
her war finished,
her hair surrounding me.
Maybe then I could
actually appreciate stars
and cold champagne
and long walks.
Because we'll walk
the world together and
our footsteps will
make some type of
song. *Click, clack*—
she is here and
I am here and
that is enough.

I'll try to step outside
with my hands unfolded—
and, god forbid, go to parties
and wait for a woman
with eyes that sing at me
through the pump of music.
But this wouldn't be a
daydream, so I'll head
home alone. I will
fall in love with
people who are
too nice or too mean
or too messy or too clean
or too good or too wild
and I'll think of her
as their shadows
unpeel from mine.
Maybe I'll go
my whole life waiting
for a shadow that's brighter
than any night I've

been through.

But if I ever meet her—
and I'll know when,
because our footsteps
will bear repeating,
over and over again—
we won't know how
the war for yearning
began or ended
and we won't know
how to unlearn
the taste of shame
unless we start
at the beginning.