

Heart of the Matter

The Shapes that Your Body

I.

Fingers ballet around each other, languid
long strokes and strong short leaps. Index
paints with the colors of your cheek
and sings the melody of your eyes—of your
eyes. Belly buttons expand and contract
in a concerted harmony, breaths become a symphony
of your life with mine. I trace the path
of your rocky spine from where the fine
hairs stand on your neck to the dip
above your pant line. Palm spreads
across warm skin and lips brush goose-
bumps—lips brush goose-bumps.

II.

Violin string plucked by practiced fingers
shivers through the air as my body tenses,
all nerves alert to the presence of you.
Legs round corner and fingers ballet around
fingers I do not recognize. Index that isn't
mine paints the colors of your cheek
and a voice I can't believe sings the melody
of your eyes—of your eyes. Violin drops
from hands as bare back rises, covers slip
to the dip of your waist and every node
on your spine aligns rigid before me.

III.

Wood chips splinter against the floor
and your spine—your rocky spine
bends backward like a figure skater
over ice that shimmers
like the salt drops on your cheek and I walk
away from the finger ballet of your calloused hands.

I Don't Know What to Say

I've dreamed about you countless sleepless nights. Or maybe, I've loved you since the day you walked through the church doors, eight years ago. Perhaps, I put on this dress because I thought maybe your breath would short at the sight of me. None of these work, so instead I say, yes, I'm happy to be home, and then I fall silent and wait but you don't say what I wish you would. I am a fool, I'll say then, a fool because I let myself think that you cared, thought, dreamed about me the way I care, think, dream about you. I wrote songs about you, poems about you and here you are, in the flesh, as disinterested as ever. So I smile and turn my back, laugh, talk, live and wish you couldn't take your eyes off of me.

You Left

You left without saying good-bye.

Blew in with barely a smile
and out before I could blink.
The door barely shut behind you,
as you made the rounds
in an ever shrinking circle around
me: sitting, waiting. Last night
I dreamed you kissed me under
the stars and today I laughed

because you left with no good-bye.

Depression

noun. a feeling. an illness. a
burden carried on the back.
an utter pressing down
of the spirit, a loss of hope,
a devastation supreme.

when joy comes in the shape
of a slash across the wrist,
a bruise on the knuckle,
a lingering peach scar marring
the smoothness of skin.

that sensation in your gut,
a tingling and a tightening,
nausea ripping your insides
because tomorrow looms
agonizingly huge, unsurpassable.

the knowledge that pills
are lies and happy an
illusion, laughter an echo
of joy long since faded,
an echo that can't replace.

when every look proves
a lack of love, a "we're
friends, that's all," a forever
alone meme humanized,
wearing your grimacing face.

a noun. an adjective.
a way of life. a death sentence
as imposing as the chair,
a destruction of soul,
a knowledge that all is dust.

Broken Toy Soldiers

Broken toy soldiers, we march.

Down hot sand dunes to desperate relief we march. Up tall craggy mountains to air we cannot breathe we march. Broken, we march.

I march from the loathing that trails after me like a kite's tail, flapping harsh memories with the wind. She marches from the father who abused the mother and the boyfriend who always called her ugly.

To the rattle of disjointed arms and empty chest cavities, to the sound of harsh breathing and deep-coughing, we march.