

To the Past

I.

The snow aged the town, each flurry sending it back ten years.
As we drove down roads muffled with white,
your tires spun out: stuck in the past.
I watched them from the passenger window as the quiet grew deeper.
Snow drifts captured the street's ghosts running between houses;
they howled and smashed their fists against my door.

II.

I outline your memory in neon lights,
turn the contours of your face into the Vegas strip —
dreams of warmer days with your skin glowing red in the sun.
I cradle your face in my hands, pull you closer,
heatwaves radiate off your body.
Ultraviolet filling the space between us.

III.

We relearned to walk along the empty streets,
deep slush and ice filling the space between cobblestone,
cold permeated the soles and canvas panels of our trainers.
You shared stories of your childhood in the mountains,
the mornings when you stepped outside to be enveloped by fog:
a world of mystery occupied by abstract shapes.

IV.

Outside of our halogen haze, my face feels older.
I pluck a silver hair from its root, hear your voice
tell me I am a queen with precious metals growing from her scalp.
I leave it on the shower wall, nearly invisible,
its curves catch the light. A forgotten language,
a sign with faded letters.

V.

Knuckles and hands brushed together before you reached out:
'It's too cold.' White with blue veins laced into faint pink.
On the inside of my palm, your thumb traced lines of poetry
I never read until we met. You recited them aloud,
words formed in nebulas of warm air —
each exhale enclosing our path in its cloud.

Re-Routing. Navigating.

It tapped both of us on the shoulder.

But told him first.

He did not tell me—

I had to wait for it to make an appointment,
leave a message,
pencil me in for a talk.

The kind that happens behind closed doors.

The kind that is prefaced with

you should probably sit down for this.

I didn't tell him I knew. Not for a few days.

But it was there. Watching me from the doorway.

Raising its eyebrows every moment he turned his back.

Well, what are either of you waiting for.

Each moment's silence plunging its blade into my lungs.

You will leave me for it,

It will hold your hand and help you with your bags when you finally walk out the door.

The flashbulb scenes from our life before are stained with its presence

haphazardly obscured—

A blurred profile

The edge of a shirtsleeve

One smirk, knowing I will later see it seeing me, seeing you, seeing us.

I am the first to smash through the silence,

Throw the photographic evidence at your

feet in a fit of fury

I see it laughing—

it wants you for itself and this is how it will

keep you

trap you

overtake you

replace me

In the morning

I uncover the spare key, unlock the backdoor
stop and watch him cut into a mango at our counter.
He cradles the half in his palm,
scores the exposed flesh vertically —
I want to tell him it's risky,
ask him if he's afraid the blade will break
through the fruit's skin and puncture his own.
His eyes stay on the new horizontal lines he carves.
My eyes go to the counter, my mug full and waiting.
We sit in silence broken apart by the
muffled squish of his thumb gouging cubes of yellow.
To the mango he mumbles
I'm glad you're back.
I take honey from the cabinet and stir it into my tea,
summon an amber whirlpool.
To its darkness I nod,
the past singing behind my clenched teeth.
There's nothing new I can say.
Nothing sacred in the mundane
pulling of meat from cheeks
sticky with juice.

Homonym

Morning.

1. (*noun*)

the light that breaks through the spaces where curtains do not close
stretching hands that find his, a sleepy high-five
gentle pushing out of the bed into the day

2. (*adverb*, informal)

mostly we sleep in, shielded by the softest dark fleece
he sometimes pulls over both of our heads, our glowing cave
close my eyes and pretend I am falling backwards into his promise of forever

3. (*exclamation*, informal)

Goodnight, I yawn into his ear
Good morning, he yawns from miles away
I count the minutes of remaining rituals

Mourning.

1. (*noun*)

if I stretch my fingers wide, place my palm on the globe
I imagine I can build a bridge, patch up the space
loose grip to close the wound, seal the cracks

2. (*noun*)

we have not opened the curtains in weeks
my eyes mirror his while we try to preserve our cave drawings
let little light and oxygen in

3. (*verb*)

glass shattered in the next room over
shards glittering across the hardwood, capturing the few beams of light
projecting a broken constellation across his face

Two Dreams from Vegas

How foolish to fall in love with the idea of forever;
but as I watched the roulette wheel spin into infinity,
numbers and colors blurring together into nothingness,
I considered the warmth of maybe
of possibility
of her hand in mine. To have and to hold tight
'til we part.

Outside he says to me
Let's run through the fountain
but I can barely hear him over the rush of
bodies and conversations, layers of music
that surround us.
His imperative sings through cacophony,
I harmonize with my laughter.

The street turns our faces
technicolored and bejewelled.
Her laughter bounces off the lights over our heads,
rains down, the only melody I hear.
I ask her again,
take her hand
before we could change our minds.

Water hits his face first
and I am slipping, tumbling onto marble.
My hands find his and tug him with me:
we go down together
fast and slow, all at once
our clumsy grace
caught by marble, slick and cool.