

Garage drinking after 1989

Her world will spiral like a merry-go-round in the belly of storms.
The matches and lighter fluid she'll buy at Walmart
will seem a lot less dangerous than they did before—
well as the cheap vodka that'll burn within her throat,
and after the fifth or sixth shot, it won't burn anymore.

Cobwebs will surround her; in all corners they'll spread like lies.
Spiders will fuck other spiders; their egg sacs swaying
with momentum like a Newton's cradle.

Her back turned, few feet away,
an industrial fan will spin at its highest speed.
She'll hate the heat; it sweats out the alcohol,
and nothing feels worse than the depths of disease.

Stale fragrance will embed,
into vintage tank tops with Mickey Mouse on the front,
over a pink bra and blue denim shorts bathed
in Giorgio perfume—wrinkled and creased, and
crammed in a cardboard box on top another cardboard box:
the furthest decade she'll be able to reach without a step stool—
the last one she'll ever trust, to rational thinking.

Only stigmas will remain—of oil and antifreeze,
Fieros and Firenzas, Madonna occupies the tape deck—
the beaming of the headlights unfolding
the shadows that ascend to the ceiling.
Hanging hacksaws will warp into sharp fangs.
Lawn rakes into claws.

And the storm will come. Her gutters will surely give,
to pouring rain under black clouds, blacker than their predecessors,
bringing bad fortune through meandering felines:
soaking black Maine Coons, taking shelter with lemon-marble eyes
gouged from years of sidewalk disputes, haven't purred in years.
Instead they stay still and struggle to see,
their eyes slowly dim like a wicker candle.

And she will feel pity—for whom or what, she won't know,
just enough to understand belligerence will not kill the pain.
A lit match to methanol works best.

Granny and papa's house

And for sure this house is haunted;
it moans at night like papa did,
when he wasn't papa anymore,
rather a sad story of children and their children
and pestilent cancer cells, his sunken cheeks pale,
and white as the ghosts who live here.
You can hear his son walk the staircase,
been dead since '72—
plastered to a tree, killed instantly,
thrown out the window like a sack of shit,
the same way most repudiated
his mendacious words of advice.
And you can still smell the menthols,
almost if she hadn't lost to the stroke
ten years prior, my granny,
who smoked before you could die from smoking,
turning the walls to dirt, stained dull yellow
like the nicotine on papa's teeth.
And granny's the kind of gal papa read poems about,
and papa didn't read poems, he was more
a hands on kind of man,
who preferred using fists when he's pissed off, scared,
and even in love because granny swears
that one of the holes papa punched through the closet door
was in the perfect shape of a heart.
And you could see right thru,
skeletons stacked on skeletons.

Swimming at night in suburbia

The pool shines mercury beneath the moonlight,
where young girls jump off of diving boards into the deep,
somewhat ashamed as only their bikini tops break the surface,
spilling polka-dots, some amber, others amaranth.
And the boys can't see, only touch, because chlorine
burns their eyes the same way liquor does their virgin throats,
sinking ten feet to the bottom, haggling air through a kiss—
sealed, the radio drowns by a thousand pin drops,
and the girls allow to be touched with pruny fingers.
Subterranean lights beam bright,
outlining shapes, the shadows: a frog
who gave his life in the skimmer, a thousand

ripples projected on a white painted fence, and silhouettes,
all different sizes as they watch their former selves,
slide off each other, a poor attempt at a carnal act,
squeezing the air out of inflatable rafts,
on such a night where fireflies dress their best,
and luminesce the pungent air.