

## On the Lake

Borrowed family boat in a shady alcove.  
As we float, hunger inspires us to great lengths –  
bearing down on an offering from the local grocery store.  
We didn't know the "right" way  
to coax a pomegranate; we hacked,  
one step up from rocks, with a wicked sharp bottle opener.  
Each garnet aril a juicy heart  
salvaged from the bleached, pitted husk.  
We tossed those white remnants to the water,  
a lazy offering to the gods.

As the azure sky darkened- "You know,  
Persephone was trapped in the underworld  
after eating one of these buggers..."  
Your fish-bone print bikini turned sinister;  
your pale skin blistered  
where I'd been too timid to rub in sunscreen.  
Though smiles still flickered like silver minnows  
as we sought the hidden stars on our way back –  
lying to be with you,  
that would truly be hell.

## Waning Interest

This was the first time  
I didn't steal a glance at your house  
while going by on my way to work.  
Nothing personal of course, just in a hurry;  
just like we've both been before, during, and after  
the time we finally moved closer.

Everyone's just busy, don't take it personally -  
but its a little hard not to feel defeated  
when there's so much lonely time on the road.

When we eventually meet again,  
we just have to pretend everything's fine  
(though we never had to pretend as much before)  
because there's no way we could catch each other up  
on all those moments of loneliness missed  
by not being closer anymore.

XMEA

And the Lord said unto them:  
let an angel mark some of your children  
with blood to spare them,  
let the males of your line be more vulnerable  
to this defect like Pharaoh's own.

This will come with tides of regret, a flood  
of hesitance - have you no faith,  
o fallen woman, or do you wisely brace  
yourself against the plagues of medical bills?

Which will you be then, a Jonah or Job -  
complaining and worrying over nothing and  
roiling in the centrifugal whirl  
or gratefully praising the good that remains?  
Either way, you'll probably still feel betrayed,  
bereft of a vindication for your indulgent tears.

## Incense

By far more pleasant than other types of small scale smoke,  
rivalled only by the earthy cracklings of bonfires.  
A part of the charred stick droops, a fragrant pendulum  
that drips ashes below (a dry puddle of grit),  
as the pale smoke spirals into ribboned arabesques.  
Whenever I watch these lackadaisical trails pushed gently  
in the air, I think of Sister Rita, who admitted in whispers  
to me and my fellow first graders that she would watch  
the incense smoke while the other sisters prayed each night.  
I remember wondering, even then, what was wrong  
with gazing on something beautiful, the thin strips like gauzy tulle.

## The Resistance of Memory

My grandma used to paint with oils  
until she tired of warning her seven children  
and all their friends that streamed through the house  
to be careful they didn't smudge the canvases.

My mother idolized her cousin that went to art school  
and when she went on fishing trips with dad and me,  
she brought colored pencils and sketched wildflowers.  
I flickered back and forth between them,  
reeling in bluegill and drawing my own crooked daisies.

I often watched Bob Ross with grandma  
in the room with her largest surviving painting,  
a cabin's window the only light on a shadowed forest path.  
Mom mentioned dad had been so good, he could have done  
comics professionally, sharp and photorealistic.  
Her cross-stitch picture of a bobcat that won \$25  
at the county fair hung in the hallway.

Years later, one of the only questions grandma could still ask,  
when she thought the house burned each time the sun set,  
was "Are you still drawing?"