

Roses After Roses

The scene was set for everything.
Even the hurried mornings. Even the irritable midnights.

I could see your hair, its irreversible costume change
black, then white at my fingertips. I pictured your lips moving

voice drowned out, shouting “I love you” at concerts
or whispering next to a sleeping child. Look, I know

it's weird, or whatever, but for a second I could smell
your shirts coming out of a suitcase, feel you

tuck my hair behind my ear at my friends' weddings
twirl me across sticky dance floors in the haze of July

and every time you sang getting into the shower, I knew
it could be this way forever, your pitchy verses tugging

at the corners of my mouth like an insistent stagehand
laughter carving lines into my cheeks—your autograph, honestly

all my world was your stage, and when the performance ended
you threw flowers at my tired feet, roses after roses

a bouquet of future days, wilting in my grasp
begging for an encore.

Museum

Last night I wandered
through your apartment
an art student

at a museum
held my glass of wine
like a pencil

took notes
in the back of my throat
I studied everything—

the puzzle pieces scattered
across your coffee table
paint cans

lining your shelves
blank canvases leaning
against your wall

waiting patiently
we made for good sculptures
your hands in my hair

your tongue in my mouth
your breath in my ear
I marveled at little things, nails

on skin, the raised lines
of your tattoos, the flashes of light
from passing cars, illuminating us

I want you to show me everything.

Navel

I should stop comparing you to fruit
but I can't help it
you *are* like the orange
on my kitchen counter,
discarding your rind
bit by frustrating bit
all over my damn apartment
making me work for my enjoyment
making my mouth water
for what?

i feel wrung out and squeezed
when you leave
you get in every cut

stinging

August

Listen.

It's a warm morning, and the birds are back to sing.
There's a bowl of ripe yellow peaches,
sliced, bleeding from their pits
into blue porcelain,
and an old grey cat that can't be bothered.

It's a hot afternoon
of piano keys and flower seeds and coffee cups,
and thoughts of her will creep up on you,
twirling through your brain in silk,
swishing and catching
on your jagged edges.

It's a barefoot and muggy night,
hair stained with saltwater,
lips stained with wine.
Friends have just left
with their turquoise jewelry and hugs,
and the silky thoughts still bloom and sway.

She spoke in hurricanes,
peeling and flooding every inch of you,
down to your bones and your blood.
Her words were carved into your organs,
her destruction echoes in every sigh.

It's morning now,
and the sink holds unwashed egg pans,
and the mail won't come for hours.
You have gone into town
for books or paint brushes or tea.

Your company is a dog
or a lover, or a cream-colored hat.
And August

with its pastries and sea glass and mirrors,
will pulse, erupt,

linger.

Artifacts

Close your eyes, you'll remember it too
the sweet pit of potential, the soft
and steady knock of my heart

run your hands over the mossy hills
of us, the neon yellow valleys, all of it
looks different now, the holiness

just sunlight, hitting your floor
just like it hits my own
and you were not special

not a sculpture, not an oil painting
just a boy with finger paint
making a mess before moving on

the last time I came over
you had a new photograph
on your wall, a topless body

her shirt pulled up over her face
nameless, graceless girl, framed
for your viewing.