

Remnants

Remember July rains, me in the gold poncho
you uncovered,
pale hair stuck to the side of your face.

We ran.

Water dripped down your legs
and the man sweeping the street
dug gold leaves from the grate
covered in that fake rust.

They had dusted the street in soap,
pale imitation of snow.

The remnants rose up,
filled the streets with white foam
that lasted until we touched it--

until it vanished,
remembered
it was always supposed to be temporary.

Lightning cut,
peeling back the night
as if anyone with a ladder
could step up,
hold the rough edge of a cloud,
step through the bright gap
up past the sky.

And I remembered
we never had finished
that conversation about hell,
when you asked
if burning was just an easy way to disappear
and I said I thought hell was like this:

loving something, perhaps,
the way I love you--
moss on the bottom of a planter in November,
last tomato on the vine.

The World Was Supposed to Be

The world was supposed to be
bigger than this--
my mother's blue yarn around my neck,
light around my nose,
dark around my mouth,
too thick around the dark skin of veins.

Or maybe I should say
my world was supposed to be
more
more than Julie's rusty yarn around my head,
covering my ears.

The world was supposed to
give me white curtains
against a pale green windowsill.
Small fingerprints
smudged on insulated glass.

And light--
light through the window
not one shaft,
straight,
alone.
Enough light
to fill a room,
enough
to make white carpet warm.

The world was supposed
to give me days like this:
lying on the hood of Shawn's car,
his fingerprints
and the outline of my hair
in the layer of construction dust.

Tracing trees in the dirt
as if drawing a thing
could make it real,
as if the oil on my skin
could make all this last.

My mother once told me God holds the world in His hands

I asked her if it got heavy.
She leaned over,
sweat a thin,
gleaming line on her back,
plucked a dandelion
from the overgrown patch in our front yard.

She gave it to me, said
it grows and dies right here
a whole life
and you
barely feel it.
It was soft against the skin of my palm.

I pulled a white seed from its head,
watched it float down,
disappear into the grass:

I asked her
what happens if He drops it?

She laughed
then threw my flower
in the compost heap
with its younger lives:

still yellow,
seeds not ready to separate.

When she went inside I saved them,

laid them in my orange wagon,
dragged it behind me,
right wheel squeaking.

I dropped them in my neighbors' yards,
two blooms each.
I am a good god I said,
as they fell:

stems arching toward the ground.
The petals, heavier,
always touched the earth first.
My stars against a green sky.

My hands were stained
for days.

Hands

Kate says,
write about your uncertainty.
*Write about the wilderness
as if you are an Israelite in the desert,
as if you are hungry
and your food is monotonous.*

I tell her I am writing about
the future of my life in the workforce.
A desk with two broken drawers,
the smear on my window where I killed a fruit fly,
my blue lamp.

But really, I will write about my hands--
the right one, especially.

How they betray me, wrists to fingernails,
when it is cold.
How my wrists ache,
how my ring fingers swell,
turn white, stiff.
How the bones in my right hand crackle
when I make a fist.

How the doctor says, *well, it could
be your mother's arthritis
or your father's bad joints.*
Or circulation, or some kind of bone disease--
but before I panic
*just wait
and wear gloves.*

She says, *you're young.*

(My body was supposed to be certain.)

Probably nothing.
I try not to think
about blood vessels constricting,
bones rubbing together,
all that cushion dissolved.

Old Grief is the Rusty Padlock on My Parents' Toolshed

it won't close
but we wedge it around the handle
so everyone passing by will believe
we know something
about security.