

Iris Hour

*for Thijs*

The only reason today is Saturday  
is because everyone agreed that it is.  
The crocuses have come and gone,  
little bouquets of a virginal spring,  
without knowing how many weeks  
passed blessed by their purple petals.

Come narcissus! Come tulips!  
It's a Thursday when the red orbs  
that I've been watching finally become peonies,  
leaning towards the sun on slender stems,  
bowing gracefully when their time has passed,  
and yielding to the scent of lilacs on the breeze.

I wake in the hopeful grey of morning,  
the birds' chattering serves as my alarm.  
I roll over and sleep a while more,  
minutes or hours, I don't know what day it is,  
but the irises are blooming.

Tacitly

I don't need to see my mom  
to know she is there.

I can hear her sweeping the back patio:  
rhythmic, dry passes of the broom.  
She's working as the sun fades  
and I read poetry in the last light,  
pausing to re-read some out loud to her.

I don't need her to stop everything  
to know she is listening.

When I look up at her  
I see her gentle belly  
folding into itself as she bends  
to pluck a weed from between the rocks.

Time softens her body, the physical,  
while hardening other things.  
I'm still young enough to bear  
the weight of vanity,  
but old enough to be growing tired  
of holding onto it,  
and know that I, too,  
will one day be softened and hardened  
by time.

This is how it goes.  
I don't need to be told  
to know.

My Dad, Born in Springtime

It's spring again and I am  
marveling at the softness of new growth  
on pine trees, electric green.  
"It feels like rubber, doesn't it,"  
my dad says to me  
and to himself.

He walks ahead of me  
and behind our dog,  
looking just like a boy  
in his sneakers and ball cap,  
plunging into the woods.

Earlier that day, we were in the kitchen.  
"It feels weird,"  
he says to himself  
and to me.  
"Six decades already passed."

Now, I watch him among the trees.  
He reaches out to wordlessly touch  
the pines and the maples,  
the softness of new growth.

Pruning

I can always find my lola  
in the garden.  
“If you cut things now,  
they might grow better later,”  
she tells me, as we hack back  
rhododendron and forsythia.

It's early spring  
and it almost feels wrong  
to stunt the growth of something  
natural.

I work in silence.  
I haven't spoken to you in days.  
I cut branches as thick as my fingers.  
I haven't touched my phone.

My lola points to limbs  
she expects me to remove.  
To me it seems haphazard,  
but her years have taught her  
just in time for her to be  
unable to do the trimming herself.

“Use the big shears,” she says.  
“It will make it easier.  
Can you manage?” she asks.  
In answer, I begin working,  
wordlessly.

The Bench I Loved

What happens to feelings  
when they fade?  
Some changes happen so slowly  
that you don't realize  
until they've happened:  
the tide crawling up to your sleeping feet,  
the day screening out to a waiting solstice.

And what of the cycles that take decades?  
The tree that slowly swallows a metal bench,  
growing around it until it's gone?  
No one can sit there.  
There is no way to access, no way to engage.  
No one would know of this place,  
the perfect size for two,  
except the people that loved it  
and know where to look for the scars.

But the bench exists.  
Once a hassle, an impediment,  
it now holds up this ever-changing thing  
from the inside.