

*flowers are meant to fly*

*Good morning Helianthus*

your perfect yellow petals  
swayed in a humid summer wind  
you replied with a quick nod  
a how-do-you-do sort of acknowledgement  
since you had no mouth

I had never spoken with flowers before  
you were tall and stoic  
polite and precocious  
each day the sunrise illuminated new facets  
of your sunny disposition

I watered you like good gardeners do  
and you'd thanked me each time  
like flowers ought to

*That water was the perfect way to start my day, you said*  
*The critters aren't bothering you?* I asked  
*Nothing out of the ordinary, you said*

From time to time a yellow finch would visit  
perched placidly upon your crown  
I used to shoo him away  
but you said you liked avian company  
they were gentle and integral  
before gardens the birds were the ones  
that sowed your seeds

You loved the sounds they made  
though you heard them differently than i did  
instead of trills and whistles  
they made sure you were growing and ripening like you should

*I miss flying, you said*  
*How can a flower fly?* I asked  
*The birds used to carry my seeds away, you said*  
*That must have been exciting, I said*  
*It was, maybe one day you'll fly too, you said*  
*Yes I hope so, I said*

The weather began to wane  
death revealed in crinkled discarded foliage

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i knew what the turn of seasons meant  
but I didn't want to admit it yet

On a particularly chilly day  
frost had nipped at your leaves  
patches of white on pristine green  
it was time to reap what was sowed  
mother nature had made it known

*Are you ready?* You asked  
*For what?* I asked  
*You'll have to decapitate me,* you said  
*I've never spoken to such a beautiful thing as you, I can't lose you,* I said

*I want you to make use of my seeds  
there are more than enough to eat  
and to sow a new crop next spring,* you said

I ignored your pleas  
I wouldn't do it  
not ever, not yet

How could I behead a friend?  
How could I sentence sentience to death?

I tended to the frilly kales and belligerent brassicas  
i plucked the last obese tomato orbs  
i pulled weeds until my hands bled  
but I avoided your beds  
i left you alone  
i was alone

*Why are you avoiding me?* You asked  
i had cleared out the entire garden except for your section  
*if you don't execute me now, all will be lost  
my seeds will be rotten and no good*

I studied your drooped head  
your petals ragged and limp  
your stalk leaned precariously into the frigid wind  
forlornness seeped from your leaves as you spoke

*Please kill me,* you begged

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*If I kill you, I may never speak to plants again  
If I kill a cognizant flower will I ever be forgiven?*

*If you don't harvest me  
my life will be for naught  
i am meant to grow and decay  
please don't waste what I've made*

The garden shears quivered in my hand  
i was about to end a special life  
to silence a self-aware flower  
i held the sharp tool to your hardy stalk  
just beneath the crook of your neck

*Do it, please!* You pleaded

I snapped the shears shut hard  
a vile crunch vibrated through  
my hands as the metal sliced  
through your cellulose spine

Your head tumbled  
Down  
Down  
down  
you hit the dirt with an ugly thud

I went to work cutting down  
the rest of the sunflowers  
your unaware and untalkative kin  
they died as you did  
but they didn't beg for death  
for them it was easy  
for me it was desensitizing

I kept your head segregated  
from the others in the barn  
you hung from the rafters  
drying in the crisp autumn air  
your dangling corpse pitiful  
a shrunken skull

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of its former sunniness

When the time came I shucked seeds  
loose from the other dried flowers  
half of the seed would be replanted  
the other half would be roasted and eaten  
just as you had suggested

But you were different  
i couldn't treat you like the others

I took what remained of you  
out to the edge of the hedge  
where the finches lived  
i sat you in the crook of a scrubby tree

I spoke to the birds  
I hoped they understood

*Take care of Helianthus  
she was never meant to be domesticated  
scatter her like you did before  
take her on high  
flowers are meant to fly*

Streaks of wild yellow sunbeams  
flung themselves at you  
the greedy finches nibbled  
taking advantage of your bounty  
as they should

Unbound by a stifling garden's confines  
your unfettered seeds would be planted  
wherever zippy wings went