

## Provincial

Time and tide wait for no man - Geoffrey Chaucer

Her lighting is always the same  
No breeze from the plains or quake from the faults can perturb  
A shadowed land covered by a dome of tulips  
That do nothing but twinkle in May's rays  
And wilt when the townspeople  
Say so

I danced my final glissade there in perpetual motion  
Asking for the exit sign never was palpable  
For that place is sterling silver  
Never tainted by rusty tears that I alone bled  
Plenty a time

When I skate back  
Often amidst the frozen tundra  
Suffocating the blooms - governed by hospitality  
The world's spin slows  
And I sink under the small town's spell  
That drifts across our sleeping heads  
As often as the freight train forges a lonely route over Douglas Ave

Though I quite like it at first  
There's a soft ease to the town's ebb and flow  
Each car houses a doe-eyed Jack and Jill  
With qualms that nibble rather than bite

Eventually when I awake in a new land  
Buzzing with bona fide as sharp as daggers  
That cut freshly grown tulips without a blink of an eye  
A jolting clarity to observe what a waste 18 years was  
Ere — with not a gust in sight.

## Apartment Lobby

On a mid-July morning when the sun blazed the beaten yellow grass  
And the pavement's brutal edge scathed any with a barefoot toe  
Softened only by the occasional sprinkle in the mid-afternoon siesta,

You stood amid two glass slabs  
Separating your longing for my touch  
From the bloody scabs on my two back heels.

An era before lead us down a Texan road  
Much longer with miles to go — a nude oasis from former dispositions  
That entered, uninvited, through the seams on your collared shirt

A sentiment only shared by two who've felt the sharpened edges of life's bitter sword  
That strikes in the dark  
Catching an innocent child  
Or a man open to love  
But taught time and time again  
Of its fleeting impermanence.

If only the scathing flames of otherly indecency  
That brought us both to the edge of indulgence  
Didn't keep us from jumping

You'd make it past those double-paned doors  
To the place of utter familiarity  
Where we spent many a night secluded from the tidal clock that marked a day and an eve

There we would lay  
Heedless to our uncut nails that he slid down my heels  
And I — across his palms  
During our last departure  
Into the darkening skies of the solstice.

## Fire

I think the conductor held the finale a smidgen too long that evening  
Just 10 years of age in a midwestern freeze  
With both a rose and a thorn for the violin and a prayer that maybe something bad would happen  
So I wouldn't have to go to school  
And face those with thin, white moms and dads adorned in cap-and-gown

My parents grew weary as the night played out  
Glee didn't dance across their eyes often  
Or maybe they were just fine

They were hurt before and saw each other's scars for what they were  
With no intentions of repair  
Because doing so would've torn them apart

Dad parked in the driveway  
And opened the front door  
Only to shake hands with a messenger of smoke  
Performing a dreary speech, introducing him to his new life

Nowadays when I see red, white and blue  
I don't hear sirens signaling Americana  
Instead a raw numbness spreads over my toes  
Because I sat for hours in that backseat  
Waiting for the firemen to finally disappear  
Only for the the neighbors to pry a little too deep  
As an excuse to turn their microscopes at our charred brown house  
In God's name

Dad told me that evening  
In the parking lot of Walmart  
As mom grabbed food and cloth  
That I will always remember that night

He didn't tell me he would forget how to smile

He shed no tears in that hotel room  
I hoped to one day catch him crying  
So he could say there's no shame in heartbreak

That strength emerges from burning floorboards  
And that men can be vulnerable too

He coated all notions of sentiment in concrete casing, airing his woes through smoldering flames

When I was 18 he finally wept  
By then it was too late.

### I See Red

An old friend drapes across my door frame.  
Bare-threaded and drenched in red, inviting cold air in  
And asking it to stay a while

A trail of hardened wax sticks, blazened on the inside of my jeans  
Whispers of annoyance which step-by-step throb  
Until completely tantamount to unconscious stitch

But slack drawn between your brows don't seize in the cold  
And there is nothing but smooth cotton gracing your limbs  
Your grievances don't quite fester into saucers and teaspoons  
That one day overflow with tears soaked in mourning  
Of what could've been

And while you bathe in the pomp of my rosebuds  
Those that finally get to breathe, out from under the ashes  
You wonder when I was burned  
Or who did it  
Or if it even happened at all.