

## ***JULY BLOOD.***

### *Reverse Revenant*

My life seems so small.  
Like I could box it up and send it down a river.  
Like I could close my eyes and recede back into my mother's womb,  
my soul returning to its home in the night sky.  
I have run dry.  
The winter store is used up.  
I have nothing left to go on,  
and yet I continue.  
Watching my family burn before me,  
hearing my father's voice whispering to me through cracked windows.  
How can I sleep,  
when my phantom-self roams the halls in the night?  
Is this deserved?  
Is the ache ever supposed to go away?  
Will my reflection return to the mirror?  
Or have I been left alone in this desolate plain,  
the wind whipping me like I used to do to myself?  
Where has he gone?  
Does he not see one of his children left bare and dying  
in the waste left by the October harvest?  
Was I too scrawny,  
too blackened by mold and decay  
to be gathered and brought home?  
I have weathered many storms, father,  
and I grow no deeper,  
no taller.  
My leaves have fallen;  
your lessons lost to the wind.  
All you find of me now is a stripped and knotted trunk,  
hollow on the inside.  
Empty nests,  
cracked plates,  
cut-off hair.  
A girl grown.  
Abandoned to the plains,  
she has peeled away at herself to survive,  
rock mounds as the graves for who she used to be.  
Ghost faces seen at sunset.  
A man's voice whispering through cracked branches,  
"Where has she gone?  
Oh, my child,  
Where have you gone?"

## *Heart Rot*

The pines grow taller and the looks grow longer.  
The hill rises and the girl in front of me dims,  
my breath growing shorter,  
her face unreadable.  
I think about how she hasn't read the soles of my feet,  
hasn't rooted around my wrists,  
for tales of the man in the woods behind my house.  
Her wooden earrings are as hollow as her chest,  
her soul as empty as the river in summer.  
I will not stand here,  
watching the sky blossom into rose and calendula,  
dripping with honey and ice,  
while you display plainly that I am not enough.  
That I don't deserve to be in your picture.  
That I don't mean anything to the other people you know,  
But that somehow,  
she does.  
You tell me with your eyes that she does matter,  
that she is enough,  
while I am not.  
You show me that blood is thinner  
than sugar-coated venom,  
and that smothered jealousy and repressed selfishness  
are stronger than our joined names,  
our intertwined roots.  
I want to push you down the dune into the spreading lake,  
as it's told me of the springs bubbling in your head,  
how they blacken and lose their oxygen,  
leaving your skeletons to float silently up to the top.  
I want to stuff you inside a tree thick with heart rot,  
with hopes that you'll find the mirror inside  
and let your diseased wounds finally come to the surface,  
where they can breathe.  
Where you can finally see them.  
Because all I see now are broken branches and sewn on leaves,  
fungi growing in your hair.  
Rot,  
from the inside out.

*You Were No Savior*

A love laced with hatred.  
Words covered in cruor,  
disguised as velvet.  
A scowl when your back is turned,  
a kiss when our eyes meet.  
Crows resting outside our window,  
turned to doves by morning.  
A knife slid under my pillow,  
my hand catching yours before you find it.  
Another on the side,  
who always leaves before you can return.  
Scratching myself from the dirt in our sheets,  
telling myself the blood pattern in the morning  
looks like roses.  
On my knees praying every night,  
the words falling from my lips a far cry  
from the screams I want to let loose.  
The tears you wipe away are not from heavenly revelation,  
but hellish realization,  
that I dream of being without you,  
and curse the sound of your footsteps returning every afternoon.  
Burying my head in your shoulder,  
giving thanks that you can't see  
the sneer and death behind my eyes,  
or feel my heartbeat quicken when you touch me.  
Planting oleander and snakeroot in our garden of  
white calla lilies and yellow chrysanthemum,  
asking if you want any in your drink.  
Moving our bed over the stairway to the basement,  
telling you I'm scared of some monster coming in,  
when I already know it's sleeping curled between us every night.  
Shoving my letters of confession up our chimney,  
asking you to build a fire because I was cold,  
kissing you before you ask about the smell.  
Drawing the curtains closed,  
singing my own private hymns.  
Hiding my matches in among your rosaries,  
watering our yard with gasoline.  
Stroking your hair as I light the fire,  
my ghosts and sins and this  
laced love,  
going up in flames,  
as I feel free for the first time.

*Weeping Willow*

Oh ancient mother,  
resting quietly underneath my feet,  
watching dutifully above my head—  
guide my steps.  
Lead me to clearings soft with fern.  
Allow me to hear  
the whispered secrets of the sparrows,  
enlighten me of the words  
written with moss on the rocks.  
Clear my head and heart  
with your soothing petrichor.  
Run your cool fingers over my ankles  
standing in your streams,  
drape your veil of leaves atop my head.  
I wish for nothing  
but to hold your hand and walk with you,  
to rest in your presence.  
To get dirt underneath my fingernails,  
stained on my jeans.  
To watch the day pass by  
but not feel the rush of time,  
urging me to never stop and open my eyes.  
Could I escape into your arms forever, mother?  
Could you carve my body into a weeping willow,  
so I may grow my roots deep,  
spread my arms wide?  
So I may silently weather rain,  
snow and shine,  
and eternally watch the day pass  
but not feel the rush of time?