

Saint

If I cry over a cat
it means they will die

and my wet hair brushed your head

I wanted to draw how your paws were locked, folded
wrapped in your favorite sheet

covering your face, grinning
and open with pain

I watched my dad dig two feet down
in a sweaty shirt

I asked if you could follow me

year after year
I try to learn
the way August shows you
how death

smells like cold new dirt and an old white sheet
and sounds like many birds

Indian Summer

Across the third rail
someone babbles about faggots
and a last October wasp
clicks against the subway light

these are the days
I guess

of waiting
to fix ways I thought shouldn't be like this

Interlude

On the edge of death
I got in your car
the end of July
the road near my house

I was biking home from the trains
sometime before it lightly
was over between us

now the floodlight sharpens
corners of the barn at night
black windows depthless in December
seller's remorse

just once more?
but I was already on the subway
death sitting across from me listening to his iPod
or dancing on the platform

so that in winter I would succumb
to forgetfulness

Fruit Flies

I laughed as I shed pieces of my pink hair on your bed
I didn't like it

but you tapped the cardboard
and made the fruit flies swirl

I left pieces of myself on your pillow
and to drown in the smelly fish tank

literal hunger churned under the sheets
as I tried not to breathe

too much
time on a subway
you drove me to that hole in the sidewalk

the green line
stained concrete

I shut it out as I shed flakes of skin from my lips
I didn't feel it

so when it got too cold
I stopped coming over

Bearclaw In December

1

I still have the hunting knife
you gave me
although the other two were lost
at baseball games

you loved to give me things
anything I looked at
New Mexico pottery and plastic trucks
even at nineteen

back against the electric fireplace
not sure where to look when your missing toe
told stories of the Citadel and General Lee

glory grew a white beard and couldn't leave
the brown leather chair

2

You and the sheets
were made of blood spots

thin Christmas carols mixed with radio commercials
only linoleum gleamed

I left as old people gagged in the dining room

onion rings and fried chicken
sweet potato fries
coleslaw

all wasted in front of hanging head
and eyes I wouldn't see open again

I couldn't wash the salt from the back of my throat

we wait
in a way it's already done

we all end up with our faces covered
in who knows what

3

It wasn't you there
wearing the clothes we picked out

they got your smile wrong anyway

we rested our arms over our heads like you used to
in between shaking everyone's hands
in our new black shoes

someone said I was your raging river

the drive home
I told my sister the Carolina fog
came down for you
calming the funeral

the sun the next day almost like spring
a bugle humming taps

I cried only when
you were above that irrevocable hole

yet our great-aunt can still make us cheese toast

and we can laugh in your kitchen
comparing dresses
and how we're all drawn to bagpipes

I can carry your coffin
and eat a roast beef sandwich
in the same damn day