

UNTAINTED

Today I flipped through a picture book of tigers
and read about their long canine teeth, which kill victims
with a deadly bite to the back of the neck.

I too would like to know the rip of my inches long teeth
into felt lined skin. For the hard flesh of prey to surround my mouth,
the sour and pungent blood to pour out from an electrified body
like a faucet, filling the slits between my teeth.

Then the wasteland of my eyes, brightly flashing like torches
into the stuck and stunned eyes of my victim staring at the end
of its life unfalteringly. Then the round of a narrow collar bone,
packed deep within the flesh, which my tongue will press against.
The target's legs would fold like the bonework of a house of cards,
and collapsed it's life would leave in jerks and fast breaths
and spasms, its blood sinking quietly into the wet dirt.

Then myself, ears hollow like wind through the trees,
lungs moving fast and cold like engines in the winter,
stripes dark with blood and fodder, fresh and untainted.

PAPER MOON

I cut a chain of paper dolls. Silhouettes clean
and round pearls like the moon. A shimmer of pink
stars and blue paisley swirls. They are joined
by their doll hand, doll foot. A chain of memories
I cannot give the words to yet. It brings rain
from my eyes too suddenly and the paper dolls welt.
The last time, I was on the train. The time before,
asking for a coffee. And before, in the quiet, whistle
and snore of my cat. Sometimes before I sleep I see
a picture of each body I know, nestled like spoons,
under a night like an iron sword, the sun a red eye
glaring. I'd like to shear the parts that hurt with a skinny
steel blade. But each doll is a perfect, opalescent moon
I'd have to drill and destroy to pluck out the rot.

I CANNOT SEE CLEARLY

I am thinking of Nina Simone, lilac wine and blackness.
Her voice is a dark road unfolding itself.
The sounds fall and we are tracing circles,
a voice like a hand on mine, coiling around
an icy beast brooding in my skull. Vines of lilac
blue surround its hazy body, shining like glass.
I listen so as not to think, to lose, to slip. When
the drum bass comes, heavy like her love, I cannot
help but feel unready for its ice lair. Her bass pounds
on, and we go together in loops around
this beast's arm, its leg. I blink and feel the violet goop
of its stomach acid flesh against my eyelashes.
Hypnotized by a strange delight, I feel this is what I want
to be, is what I am. But then, monsters are make-believe
unrealities. Mine reeks with brilliant hues and spikes
within my mind but if captured and removed
would be a shapeless, unsteady creature, suffocated
and dead without the sustenance of me.

STRANGE CONNECTION

Today I saw two brown birds crossing paths in the air, again and again, over the cracked mirror surface of the lake. As the sun dropped down in the ice blue sky, it pressed an angelic and godly shade of pale yellow against the dark gray water. The birds' wings fluttered in the gentle and rolling way the wind pulls long hair in its path. They did not leave each others' side for long, and as they performed their pendulum show, each seemed to gently pull the other along with its momentum. My eyes became relaxed as I watched their unusual idea for connection, and I became aware of the low and dark crumpling beat of the waves rolling to the right, the pale yellow glare on the lake like the laser eyes of a goddess burning holes, and a small gang of ducks ahead, treading with their orange legs kicking, cheering along like a parade of kazoos.

BURNING STRANGER

You, stranger, smell of rotting bananas but you smile like my mother after she covers the dining room table in candles and closes the lights. You stagger-step slow, like my father when he walks up the drive in the early afternoon, after the night hospital shift, to his sun-lit room for sleep. Let's think of lighter things together. Your belongings—black tarp, dirty towel, bean tin can—flat and lone on the shock-white sidewalks like a track of black candle-wicks, awaiting your rotting flame. Between your shoulders an incendiary mold, planted in you by beasts a long time ago, spoils your young, teasing years with its fuming body. It lights the pink pit of your despair, the home inside your mind. It burns through your body like a dark crime. Your voice, rasped and tired, falls far from me like the alto choir boys at the Christmas concert who sang gospel from the dark balcony. Their white faces emerged from the blackness in spheres, reddened, as if they were reflections of the pews caught ablaze, glowing cherry and mortal in God's dark home. I think of the single candles we lit for their shadow, rainy voices. I think of this while seeing you.