

Why the train stops here  
and other poems

Why the train stops here

Plowing gone

wrought iron gone

corn river limestone

steeple run quarry yes

I remember walking

town sign behind me

tree fingers jumping wind

smooth pebbles lost keys

when they told me

it was cancer in his neck

I stopped scooping leaves

and walked

down the driveway out onto the street.

cars barely metal peripheral

grey pavement gone boot

toes cold wind cheek

I thought if I walked

to her house it would stop.

yes stream amber white

on the stones gone the mailboxes the car

yes behind me slow come back she won't

understand.

now trains move fast away

town lines whir

she in Texas still would not

his bones break into tulips,

wild roses, leaves

August 31 Kaddish

I loved you more intensely  
knowing that you were going,  
inhaled your scent like sky  
in the moment after gale  
before rain:  
swollen air,  
electricity.

Leaves fell

and still your nostrils flared.

You were always the last day of summer, even then—  
the immensity of sun on the skin,  
feeling the forecast.

## Ode to Exhaustion

You're my old man  
the one I answer to  
begrudgingly  
at the beginning and end of every day  
reliable  
as the onset of winter, the sunset, the dark.  
You cover me, twine around my trunk  
like a vine, until it's difficult to tell  
where you end and I begin.  
You are my kudzu, prolific, verdant  
and I disappear beneath you like a southern forest  
where every tree and shrub, buildings and power lines  
metamorphasize into vine barrens, still green  
from the satellite,  
the biome below slowly strangling.

And yet I cling back—  
you're all that's left  
of every death, every grip I've held fast  
as someone plunged  
through the bottom of their life  
like a shattered window  
every mourning moment I stretched my hand  
after them  
struggling to catch the hem of memory,

hold the echo in my hand.

You engulf them, hold them in your tendrils

keep them breathing and trembling

always, almost

in my reach.

## Afterthought

The youngest son always

wears a hood.

It covers tumors

and conspiracies

lets him hide

in plain sight.

Some call him a magician

the way he fits

in small spaces

the way it's hard

to look away.

He was in love with

your wife, he

stayed in a back room

developing potions. He knows

he's being followed.

First he vanished into cars, then woods

eventually

in front of you,

naked but for

his covered head--

you weren't sure

he could see you.

He could.

## Anxiety

You're a snake beneath my breastbone  
lashing your tail hard, muscular  
fast against my heart.

Sometimes you lunge up my esophagus, push  
pitted head, open jaws  
into my mouth.

You aim to kill.

I shove Klonopin down your throat  
one after another  
until your head wobbles, falls back  
and I feel you slump

scales slipping past every vertebra  
in my neck

down

to the top of my stomach  
where you slumber.

I am not fooled.

You sleep in a coil  
tail rattling to your dreams,  
one eye open.