

Beyond, A Police Siren: 5 Poems

“Beyond, A Police Siren”

I lay down on the grass in the backyard

Quiet.

(Still.)

High above, clouds gather and pass by

Witnesses to the events below.

Beyond, a police siren.

The wind slices around blades, turns into bellows.

My concentration is exact; arches and lines fill and dance on canvas.

Wide.

(Full.)

Down the hallway, grandpa’s old light flashes.

Awake and not awake flickers.

Across the hill, smoke rises.

The creak of floorboards becomes familiar.

When the piano strikes just so, the room echoes the harmonics.

Ping!

(Ding!)

Watch, they tell us. Be attentive. Stand upright.

Sweet fragrances float up to heaven.

Inside the chamber, pain echo rings.

The crowds stand in circles and stare: holy leaven.

—

I cannot tell where the screaming is coming from.

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If I thought I could help, I—

I can never know where the screaming is coming from.

“18 Year Old, Foot Over Water”

Fountain and pond—
path from the Student Union—
dorms and academic buildings—
lined with bright trees, dapped sidewalks, academic flowers:

The pool filled with lily pads,
water bugs, and koi.
St. Peter’s assurance in mind,
I stepped to the water,
intent on walking over it.
Edge of the pool—
Confident and knowing—
It would work:
for no stronger faith
could be found
in the city.

Firm in belief,
I stepped, greeted with
—wet feet.

Face alight,
I knew that I had done it
because I did not falter.
The lack of miracle was not a problem.
I faced the unknown and I did not back away.

*I am surrounded by a myriad of water-walkings:
Ethiopians drumming at midnight on Pascha, dancing, filling the night, despite everything;
the week without much pain after repeated prayers for my mother;
the surgeons who worked on my daughter’s heart;
a friend’s ability to forgive.
These are miracles. They surround me. They soak me,
as the water that filled my college freshmen shoes.
Yet I barely notice them. They are average, they are every-day.
What I wouldn’t give to be 18 again.*

Standing on the edge of the fountain,
foot hovering over the water.

“Spring Training”

Pushing forward

we try it over and over again with different implements.

But nothing gets better.

Still mud, still snow, still ice.

Melting through

the permafrost with lasers, chemicals: Life underneath, dormant, still, burned away.

Nothing gets better.

Still ice, still mud, still frost.

Falling down

tripping and rolling, breaking a fall, skinned knees.

Nothing gets better.

Still frost, still ice, still snow.

Icing over

Tripping, breaking, melting, frosting.

Nothing gets better.

Nothing gets better.

Still frost, still snow, still mud.

“Mom”

Hands always cold, pain, nausea.

“I can’t go on living like this.”

Oxy mornings, afternoons,
blood thinners, sleep, rest.

The planning, organizing,
knowing of final wishes.

She cried when we cancelled the trip to France,
and she never did get to see Mont Saint-Michel.

“Either Way”

I once saw a bird land on top of the bush in the front of our yard.

It stared at me, and I at him.

Or her?

Damn birds, I can't figure out which is which: do the males have the colours and the plumes?

Or is that the females?

Either way.

We stared at each other, as I held a chicken sandwich in my hand.

He looked at me. He knew what I was up to.

I took a bite, and he chirped.

Bite--chirp--bite--chirp.

Then he turned his back to me, spread his tail-feathers wide and fanned his ass towards me.

Is it the males that do that, or the females?

Either way.

I took a final bite of the sandwich, licking sauce from my lips,

and watched the bird dance and try to flirt with me.

I knew then that I took my life entirely too seriously.

Or did I?

Either way.