

WINCHESTER, MA

You close your eyes and you are back—
a boy, amidst the leaves in fall
burning copper and goldenrod.
The bodies of creaking trees
yipping like zebras
in the sharp, smoky air—

Now you stand, in ghosts' clothes
secrets lost in the folds of your cheeks
spotted, collapsing inward,
like your scourged memory. Going, gone:
All that is left
is the sweet decay of geraniums,
and a snatch of upstairs cello.

DRUNK DRIVING

I found you on our lawn
—a bottle of wine deep, in a state of elation
like the Santa Ana winds that
whipped sticks and seed pods around the yard.

You perched on the table in a coat and
sweatshirt that you hadn't bothered to zip,

wrought iron patterns grooving your palms
and the song you had on repeat flickering
in your eyes like a disease.

You told me about the world and the whales
and how stars have a funny way of seeping into the cracks
of music and houses
and how you didn't want to go to sleep.

And every time the winds picked up
you threw your head back and yelled
and we drank until our
neighbors came home from the bars.
We picked leaves out of our glasses
but it was okay

even though
you can't understand the way I am
and you don't leave your hillside to try and look
and you suffocate me with expectation
and disappointment at the holes in my mind

but it didn't matter because the Santa Anas were howling
and you couldn't stop smiling.

ON THE SHORE OF LAKE KEOKA

We get lost down mossy paths,
velvet soft under bare soles, calloused
and hardened. Brambled blackberries—
small pockets of juice—
we grab handfuls. We
wander through the rows of cedars, bark
flaking off like scales as we weave through the dizzying
mazes of telephone pole trees.

On the beach, pine-needles and sand blend
and we rub the tips
of our fingers together, sap sticky and blackberry sweet as

we wonder
where the smell of rain goes after the asphalt drinks it up
and why the stars drown in the city lights.

ELEGY TO A WINTER MORNING

When I died
my sister stopped reading poetry about

seasons and children and oceans and age.
The morning it happened,
the cold slipped in
through fractured window frames

and the light slanted across my body.
The banks of snow outside
cornered cardinals in flight,
unable to hide in the tundra of yard

they bled like a prick of red against the white.
They scattered berries and seeds
like thoughts on a page.

Elsewhere in the house,
dirty plates from the night before wait
and elsewhere, from before,

there were cigarettes and children and fights
that ended
until settling was easier

and when you woke up

you held me
and the cardinal paused on a branch to sing
to the curve of the river.

HOW TO LOSE A MOTHER

Look at water fountains at the beach in winter, notice how they flood and overflow because they are clogged with sand. Fixate. Make sure you are unprepared.

Take a long walk that ends up on a stone wall in the park

/on a bench by the river

/in your school's infirmary where they let you into a small bunk room with three other empty beds, vacant because it's not flu season yet. Pull the wool blanket at the end of the bed up over your chin, even though it feels unclean, in case another patient is brought in. When you've stared at the corner for enough time to be sure no one else will be put in your room you can

/hit the wall hard with your palm

/sit up and hug your knees, because the pressure against your stomach will feel nice. Notice the crack in the corner and how it joins a cobweb to look like a tuft of your grandfather's hair. Try and remember what he was like and panic when you realize memory fades and you're only eighteen.

Think of all the things that she won't know

Let yourself cry for the first time. Cry over *Say Yes to the Dress* because you wanted something mindless until it reminded you of another thing she'll miss. Cry harder because you're crying over a TLC show.

Gather yourself

/to spend the night

/to leave and drive home. Accidentally time it to be in the middle of a snowstorm. Barely make it halfway, decide to drive to the hospital instead because you don't think you can make it to your father's house, and you're not sure you want to be there right now anyway.

Fishtail into the first parking spot you see because the ice is so bad you can hardly steer. Walk across the empty football stadium parking lot, dusted in snow, so white and fresh, untouched by anything but the snake's curve from your tire tracks and the dashed-out path from your boots.

No one is there, she's sleeping. Sit by her side and hold her hand

/read to her closed eyes

/master solitaire on your phone so you can finish a game in under two and a half minutes (even once a minute and forty-eight seconds), one handed, so you never have to let go of hers.

/wait.