

## Always Forgetting

I can trace ancient ruins in the dust  
of my childhood dresser.  
Grey particulates stick to my hand  
as I write my initials  
and just as quickly wipe them away  
with a rag that used to be a t-shirt.

Household soot is a reminder of time.  
It stalks from untouched corners  
like the urnless ashes of a relative  
you didn't know you had.  
“Where does all this nothing come from?”  
I scratch my head in wonder, watching  
as a flake of dandruff floats free, then lost  
in a cloud between my scalp and the floor.

Until I am a constellation, dispersed  
like fields of bloomed dandelions,  
I will focus on tidying the me  
that has already accumulated  
in stagnant moments of youth:  
these are the chores for the living.

A few wipes in and everything is far too spotless.  
I'm suspicious of glossy wooden surfaces  
like clouded mirrors, “This isn't right.  
I was never a murky visage of myself.”  
It's as if the chemical scent of almost-lemon  
has entered into my bloodstream  
and is dusting the past.

Years dilute life like water, always forgetting,  
so I'm done knowing myself.  
This is what I reason, but do not believe,  
when a voice I once recognized  
dares to wager that there's wisdom in death:

*Someday I will spread myself out completely  
and dream of you, my nothing.*

Look up,

Without life or memory, a thousand starry spectacles  
shine clear in the light from the window. Now

between faith and reason, I give up  
on recollecting those things  
I have not yet lost.

**love is not so brave, i think**

i've always dreamed of fist-fighting,  
maybe in a nice and filthy alley,  
to defend my sweetheart's honor  
in my mind i'd always lose—  
black eyed and bloody nosed—  
but i'd never be so busted up  
as to be unkissable  
after the fact

come to think of it though  
i'm not so much of a fighter  
confrontations like that are  
so far from non-  
confrontational

and if it's any indication  
i still never answer the door  
when the doorbell is rung,  
the way you do  
when you're young  
and afraid  
of the mailman

maybe i'd feel different  
in the moment with you  
and some jerk at some bar  
but i doubt it, my love  
is not a sleeping lion but rather  
some other caged zoo animal,  
less interesting to watch

so what? is what i say  
don't think i don't care

you remember last week when  
you ran out of toilet paper?  
I graciously tossed you a roll,  
staying far, *far* away  
but i was still close enough  
that i wouldn't miss

and  
if you're anything like me,  
you'd rather have a clean asshole  
than honor

### **Seasonal Allergies**

In a fit of dribbling sneezes, I promise myself  
*this* is the last one, as if each outburst was an episode  
of some true-crime television series  
that I can't stop binging. Another achoo and I guiltily  
wipe the snot from my tissue-chafed nostrils.

The world is a messy place and Mother Earth  
makes my face into a spit-shined respectability.  
Our kinship is complicated. I love Her gifts  
but despise any rules for maternal wisdom,  
what with incessantly itchy eyes  
and mockery in fresh-mowed lawns.  
Maybe She'll hear me stomp up the steps  
and slam my bedroom door in frustration:

*Leave me alone!* I experiment  
with drugs just to spite Her.

She doesn't care, brushes off the petulance  
with a Mother-knows-best ruffle of my hair.  
I sneeze again and hardly mind  
that everyone has passed the so-called courtesy  
of listing "bless you" after endless "bless you."  
That world is a cruel world  
and it's painted hastily in red hues along my face.  
We don't always agree on means, my Mother and I,  
even in adulthood. This I accept bitterly

and admit that allergens come from a place of love.

She won't coax me from my room though,  
I've had enough for today. My eyes  
are sweet tree sap that I bought from the willow  
without even knowing the price, now  
strangely comforted in my feebleness  
at the hands of a little pollen—the Benadryl  
kicking in.

With my nose still pointed up,  
awaiting a sneeze that may never come,  
I'm lulled into blurry near-dream, grinning  
in this defiance, like a flower with browning  
petals, just barely wilted at the tips.

Don't get me wrong, I'm determined to not forgive Her  
yet. But at this moment I'll pretend to sleep  
as She tiptoes in, carrying the night on her shoulders.

She kisses me on the cheek  
and shuts off the lights  
on Her way out.

## **Physics**

In high school we learn that a missile shot straight up  
spends a moment suspended—motionless—  
before falling down to its seraphic creators.  
It's there at the peak that the explosive poses nothing,  
be it death or whatever, and just sits patiently, waiting for  
gravity, like the fuzzy ball my professor used to demonstrate.

This all gives me hope, I guess you could say,  
until I remember that nobody would fire a missile  
straight up, unless in doing so they gain a tactical advantage  
over their target, guided then by computer systems instead of  
nature. Maybe there's always motion, I really can't say.  
This is the physics I will never comprehend.

## A Fable

Peace of mind comes and goes like a bird  
who has lost his way. One instance finds  
discomfort in the torrent of a hundred buffering  
limbs. The next, the body stutters, then gasps,  
there's an opening of wings. Not here, elsewhere.

I'm sane again, you hear? But that won't last,  
Thought I should tell you these things—or else what?

I imagine the Carrier Pigeon is not far, somewhere  
close. My memory has become an additional imagination  
and now there is nothing left to recollect.  
I'll forget this with his tapping at the window, all  
I'll know is fear—didn't JFK say something about that?

*Ask not what is to be feared by you  
but what fear itself will make you be*

I'm afraid I must be paraphrasing. Wait, no—  
*parakeeting*. History is for the birds, can't  
you see? I'm right here. But where was I? Yes,

four of my toes have gone, two from each foot,  
and there's a scroll wrapped around what should be  
my ankle, for those are gone as well.

Ah, now I can see. Now it is all clear: I am in a fable!  
Please don't let me forget my morals; the story can go,  
but I cannot die without all my life-lessons, spelled out

on the epistle in ornate cursive and written with red ink—  
I think it might be bird blood scratched on by quill.  
The old Carrier Pigeon never arrived and now I am half  
the man I forgot I'd be. The other half is grey with fear  
and hungry for bits of bread, perhaps in the letter, which reads,

“These are the waves to ride.  
Loss, my friend, is never so unattainable.  
Watch insanity wisk itself into the cake-dough Earth  
then bake itself to death and back. Everything flips,  
then flips again. This is unavoidable.

Please don't cry,  
laugh at those concerned with freedom. Hell,  
laugh at everything, but especially  
laugh at endlessly detailed road maps,  
whenever such a thing was necessary.

Sincerely,  
The Parietal Lobes, LSD or LLC,  
I always forget which"

I lie to myself in bed, "off course this can't be for me,"  
before the water thrashes through the open window  
and I choke on my conclusions. Strange, I thought I closed  
that. The realization hurt me more than death. Friendly reminder:

Adrift at sea in a rainstorm, most gulls grapple at the surface,  
when they should just stretch out their human toes  
and let the current take them to the ocean floor  
to drown—they don't last as long, but the world  
is prettier to know from underneath.

You see,  
it's all so like the happy-go-lucky fish:  
he knows which worms are bait, but  
bites the hook to oblige the fisherman,  
the one who kills for sport  
and throws the bodies back.