

Like Water

We'd be better somewhere softer
where glances don't cut and
spongey ground, easy on the knees
when from a height I jump
down, I tumble, we'd
be better somewhere harder
where sharp corners poke
shoulder blades caught in
a duel to make you
stand up straight
posture to keep your head level
and steps clean
toes in the dirt
heels in the weeds
poised for the plunge
the diver takes his steed
body cut like a swimmer
eyes wander down to a V
the water likes to carve,
press two thumbs, deep
in clay, dirt, stone, and skin
patience is a virtue
but only if you're waiting for
something worth the time
we don't age with birthdays
instead, each time we cry
make rivers of wrinkles
streams of smile lines.

We'd be better somewhere kinder
my greatest foe, me two months ago
my biggest fear, me in a year
we'd be better somewhere meaner
the truth is sometimes hard to hear

my little sister loves to lash with words
lick my wounds with a kitten's tongue
sometimes the antidote, more bitter a taste
poison is so sweet these days.

We'd be better somewhere further
the long trek through the snow
makes the hearth of home
burn deeper into chilled bones,
the long drive keeps you on my mind
nothing to do but
thoughts to wander, hands to steer
we'd be better somewhere nearer
a phone call, an imperfect substitution
when touch is the solution
knee pressed against outer thigh
head on shoulder, arms intertwined
we'd be better
if I was better
I fail every time.

Can the rain erode me too?
carve me as it sees fit
only if I stand still
umbrella-less in the storm
let the water wash me dirty
let the mud clean my soul.

I'd be better somewhere
hard like the homesick wave
 in the pull of the undertow
soft like the warm bath
 someone else drew
kind like freshly brewed tea
mean like bitter coffee
far like the water in the stream

my foot will never see again
close like the drink on my nightstand
and the droplets that cling to it
like water,
like water.

Trained to Interrupt

Mother always struggling for the words
or a phrase
always thought of myself clever enough
to save the day
hope you don't think of me impatient
or with something better to do
I want nothing more to be here,
finding your words for you.

Can I get you anything to drink?

don't want anything stronger
than maybe mineral water,
but tap is fine if you do
spring water if you have
tea if you want to spend the time
let the water earn its
place among the leaves
waiting, poised and yearning
as we all do, without realizing,
until the auto switch
on the electric kettle flips
the quiet sound of steam
a sigh of relief
it's over,
 it's over,
 it's over.

Creating a Need for Lint Rollers

I love finding hair on my clothes, in his sheets

 She's persistent, like leaves off a tree

Falling is just the natural order of things

 Leaving your mark, sowing your seed

Do the grocery store watermelons know they can't breed?

 Castrated for their inconvenience

But the unforgivable crime is wasting our time

 So much of our humanity is spite

Craving comfort, creating needs

 Thank God or Pandora for restlessness

Otherwise, we'd all be so boring

Qaylulah

Sometimes I need to wring out my brain
like a damp towel after talking with you
Oversaturated thoughts marinating in
the poetry that exits your lips so easily,
like breathing, like sighing, like yawning
Aren't you tired? I'm exhausted
Islam says an afternoon nap is virtuous;
I say it is efficient,
like breaking a cookie in half
to make two
Manufactured morning in setting sun
What joy to begin again
What joy to yearn for you, my long-distance lover
to fall for you again
remark on how you've grown
Meet your friends, fellow admirers,
when they ask me how you've changed
I say you used to be meaner,
but regretted it when you asked what I meant later
mostly that you had held onto it
I hope you knew I admired you for it
yearned for it myself when my kindness,
(disguised weakness) became cruelty
The heart is heavy already
from the last hug
squeeze me like the lemon in the five cups of
tea you made me
The last sip, the sweetest
all the honey had collected
at the bottom
We called it nectar.