

“Indulging in suicidal thoughts at a dinner”

Over shrimp and daiquiris,
I float in and out of the conversation
like the bobbers by the boats
outside the window.
How they lift and lower merrily
in the wake as if to mock
my situation, which is this:
unused napkins, political talk
and laughter-on-command.
When your dad was at the Pentagon—
and—
What do you want to do after school?
To do? To do. *Dadoo-dadoo!*
My eyes follow the flies
that zip and share the flounder.
Five yards out past the dock,
less appetizing fish and other critters
swim against a clock.
Ticking. Ticking.
The bobbers lift and
lower, lift and lower as the sun
takes a seat behind the horizon again
and again I laugh back at the table.

“Untitled”

I've met with the darker waters of myself
and like a coward I've preferred the shallower kind.

I've seen the water's outline, the blue-black divide
held up to touch a sky as equally impressive
and I've doubted my significance.

I've treaded among the hostile waves,
the regrets of wasted days that howl and thrash
for unspent love and idle passions.

I've lingered there, where the water is deep
and the void stares back with a chilling indifference.

How many secrets those waters must keep.

I've met with the darker waters of myself
and I've yet to greet the darker.

“Dear Tata, age 96, concerning your hospital stay without coffee”

Before I meet the last of me,
I will fix a cup of coffee for you.
How it must have sat at the edge
of your tongue then,
waiting to be sipped
or just to be smelt,
every memory of yours waiting
in that cup.
I have memories that swim
in cups of coffee too.
Costa Rica, 2011, Rosie's kitchen,
many years after you,
as part of a service group.
My Spanish was poor,
but *preciosa* is how it felt
to hold the cup she brewed
for me. Each morning like
the yawn of her lazy cats
asking for more cornbread, *por favor*.
No stale hospital beds or nurses
that hurry and confuse.
Coffee for breakfast.
Coffee after dinner.
Coffee at 4 o'clock
once we finished work
and the storm clouds rolled over
the mountaintops. We held hot
mugs in both hands while the porch
held our wet socks.
The older women hummed
each syllable your toothless mouth
could not. And I listened
but like you, what I felt was
preciosa, preciosa.

“Thoughts at a Starbucks”

It was in the church where we thought of sex
and everything bad. How young we were
when they told us to *stop it! Stop it!*
To tuck our shirts into our skirts.
To remove the polish from our nails
and annunciate the hymn.
Big Jesus hung above the altar.
How I wanted to climb him—*look at me.*
All eyes saw the sad man up high.
Sing Hallelujah! Hosanna in the highest!
No sex. No sex.
How I fought the thoughts.
How I wanted to laugh
when it didn't taste like blood.
Stop. Begin. And sing the hymn.
The confusion in our voices,
a choir of youthful indifference,
made the laity clap after the mass.
And all of us asked when we could play again.
And all of us asked that we might play again.

“On sex”

They told me it was a sin:
naked parts touching too early
with no excuse but want.

I want
the nakedness,
the touching and
the taking of the fruit.
Because I'm ripe
every curve yearns
to share its milky youth
and every nerve,
to burn and burn,
as if we're here to learn
how to want and be wanted.