
Wandering Womb

In Salem my mom said something about
The talent it takes to turn a horrible tragedy
Into a tourist attraction,
And how still today we're still killing young women
Whether by the traditional flaying or that even older
Accusation of madness.
Which made me wonder just how much I do the same to her,
How often I call my mother crazy
How often she must have heard that word.

Host

I had a dream you came back
Appeared out of nothing, sitting on a patch of grass nearby
Mark me, he said.
And smiled with folktale teeth,
Mossy like they say on the north side of the oak
Ugly
Open sores on your arms, hair greasy hanging before your eyes
You looked at me like you used to
All plaintive behind some dark empty dregs of
A pot of coffee I didn't ask to be made
Confined to fast in fires, you said
As was I,
Neck deep in alcohol
Making my grandmother proud,
Boiling though it was February.
"You said you would call," you said
As your flesh is tearing up in boils
"I told my mother you would."
Some old obligation, someone
Telling you without telling you that you must
Say okay,
List, oh list.
Woke sweating to a dark room, too close
To where you used to live
Different arms beside me in bed,
I took his hand and kissed the fingers.
Dead, dead. Can't you recall
Can't you stop remembering

Thursday Morning Aloft

Let morning slip by so painful,
Remembering a childhood infatuation with leaves
And light patterns:
Animals with mottled fur
Or the interlocking shapes of shadows on pavement.

The certainty of the glow about the windows
Objects to the fruit flies buzzing by the avocado peels
And coffee dregs. Was it Stevens
Who said such things were holy?
Or have they always been so—regardless of the
Day of the week.

Material objects, rocks, and wilted plants with
Death tinging the edges of their fronds—
They cry out for water just like children,
Visual shrieks
Instead of the audible yells of
The family in the adjacent apartment.
The egg cups in a row adorning the mantle
Speak as well, no sense but the memory
That precludes them.
Sets of five otherwise broken,
Reflecting the sway of the oak branches
Nearest to the bay window.

In A Thing So Small

*Every morning I wake up at six,
And I heard his voice crack on the other line,
From dreams of you all night, that never stop,
And I can't fall back asleep
So I lie in bed
Until it's time to get up, shower, and go to work.*

In my car the still streetlight coming through trees flush with leaves
Sprinkles across my thighs beneath the dashboard
On the windshield, a small white spider
Walks over the glass, unaware I am beneath him,
Lit up by the fluorescent lights and so pale
Against the dark sky
On the phone it is all heavy breathing and I remember this
Is the third or fourth time in just as many years
That I've made him cry.

The Future Is Exactly As You Imagined It

From the car on my drive home I can see
The girls leaving the outdoor restaurant,
One with her hair tied up in two buns and
The other with a buzz dyed bright blonde
They cross the street and laugh while the walk signal blinks down to zero.
Sometimes I almost miss the green light
Watching them or someone else
Or looking at my phone waiting for text messages
Or wondering if other people i know
Are walking out of restaurants or waiting for lights to change.
In the future there are clean white walls and
Chrome booths, your apartment has a bricked in fireplace
And a new laundry machine.
When you go to the grocery store you bring canvas bags,
At work you compost the plastic cups made from plants.
In the future you run in the graveyard a couple blocks away
Where the latest headstone spells a lifespan from 1841 to 1919
Nobody buried there imagined consequences to their actions.
In the future
Your roommate describes it as a welcoming cemetery,
And you think that the most frightening ones
Must be more recent, the ones which infer full skeletons
Or even human skin and hair just six feet below the pathway
Ready to climb out or be dug up.
Here all the bodies beneath your sneakers have turned to ashes, dust, dirt.
Sometimes, in the future, when I drive home at night or run down the
Promenade in the evenings
I see electric cars which plug into outlets like
Automated toothbrushes, and I also see the ice cream truck
Which here by the sea plays "swimming swimming,
In my swimming pool."