

Drawing a Tree

My therapist asked me to draw a picture of a tree.
She can be a real asshole sometimes.

This is maybe the hardest thing she has ever asked me to do.

My drawing skills are sub-par, at best,
And, as she showed me the colored pencils I can choose from,
I see eight different shades of green.

How am I supposed to decide which green to use here?
This is clearly a test
And I'm not falling for it.

I color the leaves red.
I guess it's Fall now for my tree?

That probably means something, too.
Shit.

Next to my tree, I draw a pile of leaves.
I'm really leaning into this Autumn motif.

Do I draw a snowman to throw her off?
No, she'll probably ask questions about that.

It would probably represent my dad or something,
And how I'm going through a change in my life,
But the presence of my father, who was often unreliable,
Seems out of place, and I don't know what to make of it.

Damn it.
I should have just chosen a green.

For Anne

She never liked going places

She would rather get drawn into the echoes of our home
Sprawl to the corners of our bed
And sing to the tune of half-forgotten memories

She never saw anxiety as a cage
But as an untrimmed tree whose branches she loved to climb

I would try to call her down
Tell her the ground is firm
But she really didn't mind the view
Behind the branches

It's not that I wanted to go out more
But I wanted others to know the universe behind her smile
To travel the lightyears in her eyes
Then maybe they would understand
Why I stayed home too

So when she asked to go out the door
It was as if the wind had blown off all the leaves
Exposing the bare, fragile limbs underneath

I knew it was serious

She never liked going places
But she tried to leave too soon
Couldn't stay in our home
Told me to walk beside her
Sit on the corner of her bed
And watch her go.

In a world too big for her to explore
It seems so small without her

If I could
I think I'd be a little less hurried
Follow her impulse to stick around
And breathe shallow
Ready for the exhale

Bruce Wayne Looks at Ninety

Your utility belt sits up a little higher than it used to.
Hands rougher than a billionaire's should.
You did your best, you think.
As you take another sip of ginger ale.

It helps things settle for now.
But you know, there is still burning.
A wishing for how things could have been different
How you could have been different
But not in a way that required you to take off your cape

You had to make those sacrifices
You did what needed to be done
You did what was right
It was always what was right

You can't spend your time
Riddled by past mistakes
Frozen memories wrapped like ivy
Clawing at you

But you can still feel the pain
The bane of all you couldn't save
Their silences fill these halls

And sure, you are still celebrated
You are a good man, after all
And no good man dies alone

But the joke of it all is that
Even heroes age
Muscles collapse
And wounds take a bit longer to heal

And heroes die
And the world you tried to save
Will wear the marks of a mask
You never took off in front of them

And this city may still fall
While your signal lights the sky

But at least you can rest easy
Absolving yourself from the blame of it
You did your best
And that's the ending you wanted
While the rest of us remain
In the story you scripted

Victims and enemies
Alone together