

summer firsts

I lose my bearings
staring out at arid fields of *'where are we?'*
until I finally find my focus on cyan skies of *'I don't care'*.
My hair splits into streamers, fighting battles with
the wind, my cheeks, blessed by the breeze, are glad to lose
the war. Your singed fingertips tap to tunes three
times our age. The radio loud, whispering: *'things were better then'*,
if only we could hear our future selves
screaming: *'things were better now'*.

The sun squeezes our cheeks, the heat
is cheap and full and free, the next morning
the bill arrives in the form of berry red
burns that make it hurt to laugh or flash
a half-baked smile. They're all paid in full
by the end of the week, with peeling streaks
of skin and flipping pillows in our sleep.

My feet fumble atop your glove box as I make a lawn chair of your
passenger seat, my thoughts of tomorrow now lost somewhere
in and amongst the cigarette ash dancing on your dashboard.
You roll the rear windows down too far to be driving this fast
and they transform your four-door ford into a helicopter, its blades obliterating
all pressures in its path, slicing through the elephant in the room
until minced safari meat is scattered across your dash, baking
in the hot sun twice as fast as our cheek bones. The ice
has long melted, the butterflies in my stomach sip
from the puddle it has left, freed from the burden of
breaking it. We wind the windows up and land the
chopper in the grass. Our hands meet, then our
lips, leaning over gear sticks, etching summer
in invisible ink on our skin, praying these firsts will last, playing
this game we play, only pausing for cars to pass.

Prisms

The might of the world shines through us like light
through a prism, we are not imprisoned
in our minds, we are enshrined in them. And on desolate days
when the shade out-crowds the light, we must reflect
back on our own flame and shine through
ourselves. For the world does not bend to us,
it bends through us, refracted
in the diamond of our minds that we
mistook for glass, where we ask
for shifts in ourselves first and the universe
last—we cannot make the rain bow
down or the ground stand up, the seeds
of change we wish to see must
be sown within us. We cannot split the
seas, only the oceans of marvel
flowing through our souls, we cannot flood the
lands, only the plains of our minds
where nothing yet grows—waiting for
us to decide what to plant. So we strew ourselves across
the soil, drenched in the zest of our dreams, waiting
for the white light to strike us, to enter our
spirits and split us into spectrum, until we are the rainbow
hues painting the cosmos, rebounding infinitely
off our own reflection. We are not imprisoned in our
minds, we are enshrined in them—a medium dispersing
the earth and its heavens. We are prisms, we cannot
change the light, but we can change its direction.

your dial

I can still see you
trying to throw a punch
with hands attached to the son of a man
that never showed them how.
You couldn't fight back.
But you could fight back a frown, and beat your lips into
line better than a fist ever could—even
though you never had to,
because no one at home looked up
long enough to ask, not because they didn't notice,
but because they didn't have to.

And when the bullies did what bullies do, your eyes
were the prizefighters,
putting teardrops in rear naked chokes,
pinning down the pain face flat against the mat
saying *stay down bitch*,
the same words they said to you,
grabbing heartache by the throat, grappling with
demons they could never grasp—so they gripped onto you
with their hands instead,
because if they couldn't understand something,
it must be broken,
not them.

And when fists teamed up with words, cracks emerged
on the surface of your dial, but adults who mattered
just told you to “put a smile on it”,
so by the time the cogs of your mind started to clog
with abuse, the clocks of your eyes could no longer
tick, and your fragile glass dial finally shattered to pieces, the shards
too scattered to fix.

no smoking at the table

I don't care if it's your last one.
Your lighter just laughs at me,
its hellish tongue licks the tip
of the sleeping beast your lips
have now befriended, a slender
skeleton trading life in exchange
for death. Your breath accepts the offer
on behalf of your blood, deluded by your
brain. The dormant devil kisses the flame
goodbye, and awakens into Satan wrapped in paper and dried
up like the very dreams once within you. An orange cyclops
now in place of where a smile used to be—with every
drag it slyly winks. It's too late, you're too
weak now to prize it from your
lips, your eyes the size of dinner plates, like
the dirty ones between us, caked in half-baked fish and
lemon wedges half as sour as your words, but every bit as
dry—you'd sucked the life from them, like you'd done me,
and left a rocking rind. You ash your lucky on your
plate, the fish now half-baked half-smoked, your
eyes shrink down to dessert bowls. You lick
the citrus off your lips and wipe your fingertips across
the yellow and purple of your shirt covered
in burn holes. A stained '24' across the front, a
childhood hero on the back, back when you
fell in love with a game that you could play without
a pack. It's been months since you touched a
ball. Your dreams use to dribble off the walls
inside your mind, your eyes, wider than the
rim. Your words were sweet orange slices at
half-time, now they dribble, sour, down your chin.

the cute girl at Starbucks

Two cups of coffee and a biscuit
are all that stand between us.
I stir through my brain
searching for something to sweep
her off her feet like spilt
Coffee.

I step forward.
Rehearsing.
My mind starts spinning
inside my skull like a blender,
slicing sentences
into
cubes of incomprehension,
until all I'm left with is an iced
C

o
f
f
e
e

of letters.

I step forward.
My brain now fully freezing over,
forgetting and fumbling,
crumbling away like a
Biscuit.

“Hi, what can I getchya?”
The ice melts away in my brain—
It drips down to my lips and they both start to chatter.
I stutter and stammer,
making sounds instead of words.
coff-hjsgakdfsvgj.
The cat walks across the keyboard in my head
before making his way down
to finally get my tongue.

“Coffee?”
I nod.
She fakes a smile
so plastic
it could suffocate a sea turtle—
it'd probably hurt less if she frowned.
She jams a straw down the throat of the iced mocha she's making
and I turn into the turtle she's drowned.