

## **Proximity to Trees**

*For Vita*

Taste air, bone fed  
blossoms that recycle,  
destroy, condense  
and give birth again.  
Fire engulfs and forgives  
once a year:

burns new paths,  
then returns to black bed.  
Air revives, bottled—  
broken seal in city's dreaming—  
Return to rank air  
and fetid breath of mammal,  
who knows no mediated circumstance.

Air viral,

air crinkled,

dread air packed too tight

between metal and man,  
air of terror oceans  
and somber harbors.  
Excuse the air  
that is too thin,  
or mottled by fog,  
severed by lightning.  
Remember breathing.  
First moments.  
First memories.

Breathe deep,  
hold, depress,  
compress emotions,

breathe out.  
The trees protect, burn,  
revive, forgive.  
Growing too close,  
they will hold each other's branches up.

Air drips  
from us  
like afterbirth  
or beforebirth.

### **The Things We Forget**

Grandpa looked like this:  
that morning, sunlight edging  
over the shades and casting  
pinwheels of light  
across my brother's  
barely cresting back,  
I creep,  
noiseless  
to my four year old  
ears, down the stairs  
and into his living  
room, as if led  
on a single rail  
to the television,  
where I sit on my feet,  
and digest the saturday morning cartoons—  
frames no bigger  
than my fingernail.  
If you look closely,  
each show is really  
about the young men  
with art school  
in their past and a dream  
of the Sistine Chapel

in their hearts, this one  
more gig in cartooning  
before the big break,  
this one more gig  
becoming seven, eight  
more gigs, stretched  
and honed into each frame  
until their death,  
as the color seeps  
from their eyes, and  
the vibrant blues and  
reds mix with  
the satin coffin sash  
and the hard packed  
earth.

Grandpa looks at me,  
smiling.

He turns away.

Grandpa looks like this  
now:  
Saturated ink,  
blurred lines,  
12 frames per  
second.  
Plugged in and  
pumped with ink  
from China.

He looks at me.

I look away.

I can't see him anymore.

**Unsee**

Starting with the nose,  
which curtained the rest,  
I erased the pencil lines  
of my affections. I saw  
my fingers thrusting through  
those lips, then the lips  
diminished, you were gone;  
it was my fingers  
and empty air. Where you were,  
I put death, stillness, I heaped  
the sins and the guilts  
like a guillotine, like the chair.  
And your hair the cord  
I could swing from the neck.  
I unheard your voice, I severed  
the stanza of our sex.

Out.

What were left were your messages  
on my phone, your pleas.  
Your sympathies.  
I faked niceties  
as was expected of me,  
until I was told, I didn't  
need to anymore.  
So you disappeared.

Into the past I watch you go,  
leaving not even one delicious elbow.

### **Where Things Grow**

*After Georgia Zildjian*

Intended for you, the letter instead  
waited,  
in the notebook under my bed,  
where dust wept for me,

and my dog's paws occasionally felt for it,  
sodden, somber.

The letter became paragraphs became  
sentences became  
words became

pulp that seeded in my bedsprings,  
crept a green yearling beneath me,  
until one morning a root chained me,  
lying in bed, thinking of you.

Thinking of the letter  
that read 'Dear Heart.'

I sneezed as the tree  
pollinated me with a fresh  
memory of your arcs  
and divots, the way the front  
of your collarbone caved in  
and held water in the shower.

I was pregnant with love for my self's  
image of you,  
sewn by the word-  
tree's sappy lust.

Imagine the stinger  
leaving the bee being  
the most poignant pleasure.  
The precise conclusion of sex and death.  
Such must it have been  
for the word-tree,  
for it shriveled and died  
immediately, my bed falling  
at an awkward angle where  
a leafy branch had held it  
together, long after it rotted the frame.

But the seed of it grew inside me,  
and I will bear a son miraculously.

You:

the boy who will read  
this letter eventually  
in the mosaic my son's eyes  
burn into your skin.