

life (and death)

My peace is fragile, disrupted by a breath and a mere droplet, maybe even a mighty fall of dust, because I am weak and no part of me is solid enough to withstand an encounter without relenting to fluidity and falling into the next, and the next, until every part is sent into a disarray that ripples across the whole of my self, and I vibrate with helpless chaos until stillness decides to take me back into its quiet embrace, which never lasts long enough for me to find security in its affection; any second now the letting-go will come and some other force will find me in my naked aloneness and decide to offer its unwanted company, and I can only hope that it will be the cold that finds me first, and enough of it, too, so that I can find a quiet stronger than what stillness can give me, and I'd let it put me to a sleep which starts with a fine film of frost and ends in a complete and utter silence, undisturbed by even the collapse of dead branches or the creaking footsteps of curious children, and I would be in a state like death, and yet, the feeling of wholeness, of fixedness, is, to me, a taste of immortality; but alas, it is not coldness but heat which gets to me first, bold and unforgiving, and it scares me, but I cannot resist falling into its arms and dancing its fatal dance, which spins me too fast until I'm dizzy out of my mind, taking me from my self and turning me into something else against my will, (another example of my fragility (which idealists might call versatility)), and I get high off the energy, which sends me into another sort of chaos from which I cannot return; stillness has abandoned me completely, which was bound to happen anyway, sooner or later, and I go up, up, up, until it is nothing but me, and when the heat leaves me, too, I get that little taste of wholeness, a brush of stillness, maybe for a millisecond (because it never does last very long), and then the weight of my existence overwhelms me and I am falling quicker than I rose, down, down, down

until I reach my second death and the impact shatters me, and again I have to ask “Who am I?” but I am gone before I know.

—from the perspective of water

### Facade

They speak of Hope like it's a beautiful thing.

Brilliant and vital.

Colorful and bright.

Passionate and eternal.

But it is not.

It is

The lovely glint of an eye

Before it breaks you.

The ladder to the top

Before the cliff crumbles away.

It is borne from the pain of loss

And the lust for what's missing.

Hope is

Cruel

Helpless

Unforgiving.

And I love it anyway.

### Aftermath

I once knew a muse  
That was beautiful and blue  
But she was a poison to me  
And the more I loved her  
The more I bled  
So then she left  
Leaving nothing in her wake  
But dust and echoes.  
Now  
My music sings without a voice  
My words ring without a soul  
And my heart  
Beats without color.  
She was a poison to me.  
But her presence  
was my vitality.

### Numbers

A fear of math is not the same as a fear of numbers.

Mine began with the neat little rows of timed addition tables from second grade. The ones I could never get through fast enough. The ones that came back to me with red circles because I was never smart enough. And then it was the word problems from fourth grade where the words themselves were familiar enough but the hard logic of the numbers was too dense for me to untangle myself from. And then it was the numbers on the clock, which changed too fast for me to keep up, as if they existed to remind me of my slowness. Even worse were the numbers in the years I'd write on the dates of my homework assignments, whose last digits always increased when I least expected them. The awkward cross-out of the seven in 2017 to fix it to 2018 was almost as bad as the stumble in my words when they ask "How old are you?" and I have to remember that I'm 15, not 14, 16, not 15, 17, not 16. And soon it'll be 20. 20 years in which I should've accomplished this, and this, but didn't. 20 less years of my life that I have to accomplish all that I haven't yet. 20 years closer to death. Each number is a certainty, a condemnation. 0.3% away from an A. 0.05 away from the GPA I wanted. \$14.75 spent at Starbucks. \$800 away from affording rent this semester. 8 plus 5 was not 14. -1 point on the addition table, which means 1 less point than that kid my parents always compare me to. 10 am minus 4.38 am is not at least 8 hours of sleep, which means I'm going to fail my exam tomorrow, but my heart races away with the clock, and soon enough it'll be 5.16 am.

I'd rather not know.

And so when the night grows too late for comfort, I cover the numbers at the top of the screen with my finger. I avoid eye contact with calendars, and when the days start to blur

together, I let them. When scores come out I squint my eyes almost closed, and when I open my bank account I look away. Ignorance is bliss, and numbers hold all the knowledge.

