

## Toolbox

I've had broken teeth dreams  
And woke tasting my gums for blood.

A girl said she needed my incisors for art,  
pliers shining in her hand.

She was beautiful in the way of people who know  
they look good while concentrating.

Fingers stained burnt sienna  
and black, she drugged me with whiffs of turpentine.  
Surrender slipped gauzy under my tongue.  
Of such dreams, Freud says, *anxiety about sexual experience*.  
Jung says, *renewal*.  
Not violence, but yes,  
disorder.

In the dark afterwards, my teeth  
were whole. I looked at the blue sliver

of floodlight along the curtain  
and knew my life.

You need them for art, I asked, flattered.  
She said, art suffers no impediments.

Photograph of Two Girls Outside Crazy Horse, South Dakota (2007)

I remember saying, *bury me*,  
South Dakota Badlands,  
crumbling crowns of black stone and basalt  
in the empty ocean of the Midwest.

Under my hand a grasshopper scythed  
its butcher paper wings.

We pointed our camera at a motorcycle gang, behind them  
a heaving forever of sunflowers,  
a harmonica,  
the yellow sound of mosquitos.

Or maybe you pointed the camera, and I  
held up the unfinished nose of the Indian head.

*Bury me, or cut me open.*

I was too young to love a landscape so greenless,  
too young to think my bookishness was anything but  
a free pass to hop from coast to coast  
and skip the breadbasket in between.

Years later, bowing  
against Chicago's lusty sleet,  
I think of you with an imaginary scalpel in your hand,  
back of your dad's RV, working on what you believed to be

an improvement of my body,  
stunning revision,  
while the sun thundered against the plastic curtain  
of our small window.

## 2AM Instagram of Lunar Eclipse

Green sunslant across the dresser should be,  
is not quite, an antidote for this hangover. Urgent, the phone

opens its single rectangular eyelid. A few sentences  
from you, and I'm drunk again. In the night you scrolled through

the pixelated good times and lit on  
my white blouse, my rose moon. How well these images  
unscrew your silence. Etched in blue,

you ask for more sweet, you ask if I remember  
that we have decided to forget certain unerasable errors.

Taking your words outside, a breeze lifts rosemary to my lips, I breathe it  
toward you loose  
in my two hands, and because I am so glad

to have your attention (this sparkler burning down to its metal stem)

what is there to say next?

Concession: my love's a shaky bubble drooping  
from a plastic wand, all swollen gleam and neon rainbows,

resigned to death on a blade of grass.

## Striking Matches

### I.

You are dealing cards on a picnic table, the wood  
bruise-hued, bloated with rain, its seams crusted chalky-white.  
Someone jokes “cocaine” because we’re high, I say

“it’s probably bird shit.” We’re playing cards  
and I’m talking to make sure you hear me. In the game,  
you and I are partners. I forget the rules.  
Not Hearts. It’s not Hearts but we might be losing—

the rain ceased hours ago but the light that burnishes  
your hands is still wet.

### II.

You are in your apartment learning Spanish from Cuarón films.  
Your shirt smells cold,  
of struck matches and want. You’re using something sharp to tune gears that turn your  
hands black. In your hands

I am

a melting icicle, a fringe of foam the tide leaves behind.  
I’m not going anywhere but I might be  
shrinking.

### III.

You have an impulse to gather  
all the cards to you while they’re still dry, still make that busy click when shuffled,  
but also  
to drink the whiskey that’s been passed to you. It tastes

like marigolds might.  
Hot crowns, dry flares.

I wonder if I’ve spoken in the last hour. I wonder if instead I’ve been dancing  
free of hands, in the bloom of light tossed from a window,  
revolving to the tune you shuffle: red-  
heart black-heart red-  
heart black —

### IV.

You are leaning against the wall of the Rijkmuseum and it is leaning back on you while  
you watch the black crowns of trees  
swell with birds, then deflate. My feet are icy

and I just broke a toenail, the Marley's seams  
bejeweled with blood. You just lit a cigarette and the rush has you  
in a headlock.

V.

In my sleep I open my mouth and a spider drops in.  
I swallow — I always swallow. Transparent threads suspend  
me from the ceiling and I kick my legs like a Rockette,  
kick my legs like a doe leaping from a freeway,  
kick the blankets free.

You hold still on your side of the bed,  
your body curled around a vacancy.

VI.

You're threading sparks up my spine,  
giving up on card games. With friends, with the evening musk

of trees and gasoline, we pay attention to nothing

but each other. Even if we threw our desires on the table face-up,  
to be good all the time  
is impossible.