

root system

I have not been in my grandfather's home
For at least five years now

I remember the crooked weeping willow that grows in his backyard
Long, mournful branches that brushed across my face
Easter egg hunts with colorful plastic eggs tucked in its notches

My grandfather no longer speaks my name
In fact he has never spoken the name I chose for myself
I saw him last year, at my uncle's 50th birthday
And not a single word slipped past his lips

He refused to go to my high school graduation
He told my mother it would be too hot, that his shattered knees
Which carry his spiteful, god-fearing body would be sore from sitting too long

Weeks later, he made the two hour trek there and back
To watch my cousin graduate from kindergarten

My grandfather accepts ignorance as his God
Swallows nothing but stale communion bread and the bitter blood of Christ
Never apologizes, only offers handpicked scripture
That weaves the narrative of my damnation

I am his hellbound granddaughter, his forgotten sorrow
I fought furiously to make myself known to him

When I stopped craving his love
When I stopped claiming space in his life
When I stopped hunting for pride in his hollow smiles

I found my own wilting weeping willow to plant myself beneath.

atrophy

The fruit in my kitchen is overripe

It bulges with decay
And a sweetness so vile
That a light breeze is enough to blow the scent my way

I am standing in front of the utensil drawers
With a steak knife pressed against my abdomen
Silently wishing someone would wake up
To get rid of the repugnant fruit that wafts rot into my nose

I wonder if anyone can smell me wasting
My organs putrid and rancid
Stomach acid overflowing and devouring my bones

I dig the knife a smidgen deeper into my stomach
My brain screaming at me, telling me to carve out the parts of my rind
That have decomposed beyond repair

I finally thrust down, splitting the fleshy orange in front of me in two
The smell is horrifying
I barely make it to the sink before I vomit

I don't know what makes me sicker
Rotting fruit
Or that I am watching myself wither away.

lost garden

Sometimes I hammer nails into my Achilles
To hang pictures off my ankles

I wonder if those who came before me
With silver coated minds like mine
Bled as much as I do when the hammer strikes down

When we speak, acrimonious wisps
Of what was meant but not said leak out

There are shards of lightning stuck in my eyes
From when cruel, callous men
Stole pious innocence from a seventeen year old
Who barely knew who they were
Let alone what they wanted

The sour taste left in my mouth
From teeth grinding themselves into dust
Carries echoes of his voice

I am bound with duty
To carry this memory from home to home
And give it space to grow
I tend to all my plants with love and care

Even the ones

I will lose.

prisoner of war

I bear a curse
One that stretches an eternity behind me and in front of me

There never was a me without it
And I will carry it on my back
With the knowledge that existential wrath and fury
Is what motivates it to stay

I am a deadly sin

Condemnation to this hellish forever was always deserved
Dante himself sneers in my general direction
For having the audacity
To exist as a flawed, dismantled skeleton that aches and roars

Scratching nails down the wall until my mark is made

The voice in my head speaks venom into my veins
A constant barrage of what I am supposed to be

But am not

My faithlessness shakes in time
To the board striking across my skull

I bleed red

Dark, deep hemoglobin rich red
Leaking out across the floor in pentacles that hex me
Eternal doom in my blood

The ones that came before me
Were sealed away for far longer than a lifetime
Until their bones, fragile as flowers
Made the decision to become dust

Brokenness is feared.

love language

Transferable memories like contact paper on tshirts
I write a grocery list that never forgets you

I wonder if you know what it means when I say I love you
When I look into your eyes, and murmur lovely little fractured phrases of adoration
Gentle mirrored hand movements
I may remember little these days
But I remember that you and I fit together
Like the carved out shoreline of the beach

I wonder if you know what it means when I say I love you
Hours spent each night committing the radical act of missing you
Of thinking of how what I write and say
Means nothing until you are there to translate

I burn down the neighborhoods in my mind that have resided there for eons
In order to let you plant gardens where the blight once stood

I wonder if you know what it means when I say I love you
We are the sand-filled shoes of quiet suffering,
Of wanting to scream but only whispering
However, I'd take all the suffering you feel
And make it my own in an instant
No hesitation, only the knowledge
That you no longer have to carry a cross you never deserved

I wonder if you know what it means when I say I love you
I am full of perpetual apologies for never loving enough
When you deserve love that possesses the gravitational pull of our big blue marble
When you deserve love that starts and ends your day like the sun

And yet, I wonder if you know what it means when I say I love you.