

## CONJUGATING THE VERB "TO BE"

Because of daylight savings, poetry class ends around the time that  
The sun is beginning to set. This time of day makes me saddest,  
Even when I try to intellectualize it to myself. It makes me sad  
To watch the light of the world slowly trickle out, collect at the  
Bottom of some unknown pail. During class, I'm watching the  
Shadows. The shadow of a flower presents itself on the laptop  
Case of the man sitting across from me. The shadow colors  
My teacher's face a gentle easy color. His face suddenly looks  
So much softer. The word "soft" was designed with a gentle  
Landing. At the end of the course, I'm sure I'll tell him,  
Quite seriously, that he is someone I was destined to meet.  
Three-fourth of the way through every English class,  
Something predictable happens inside of my brain.  
My body seems to be so quiet that it is almost  
Entirely filled with the awareness of life. It is  
Very easy to forget that we live on a planet and  
I almost forget until I'm walking home and I  
Catch a glimpse of the moon, a little brush of  
White dust against the blue sky. The blue today  
Was so beautiful it would have to be described as  
Aching. Last night I had a dream about a newborn child,  
A planetary baby, one of a kind. I'm thinking  
Maybe it was me. How the relationship between  
Mother and daughter is inherently spiritual.  
Look me in the eyes. I am your daughter.  
I came from nothing. You conspired with the  
Universe to create me. I am your daughter.  
Even withstanding the possible animosity  
Or tension between us, I am your daughter.  
When even the act of existing is a spiritual act,  
Life becomes easily magical. At given moments,  
I'm tempted to shake people's shoulders and tell them,  
Isn't it.. Isn't it crazy we live on this planet? Isn't it... isn't it?  
I fight the temptation to do so and focus on

Buying my mother whole milk at CVS but even  
Then, my imagination is a bird that sits on my  
Shoulder and takes in the world with me. I start  
Thinking about the cashier wearing her hair down  
And how maybe when she goes home, there is  
A sunbeam tangled into her hair and no matter  
How hard she tries to brush it out, it stays.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD IS PREDICATED ON MANY ASSUMPTIONS.

The philosophy of the world is predicated on many assumptions.  
But I don't want to talk about any of that.  
I had the most left ahead of me when I was just a baby with a planetary  
skull and impressionable skin. I'll never be that kid in the high  
chair so I look to the future and imagine being a mother myself.  
My friend says that salting her food almost feels religious.  
I get that when I'm eating olive oil and bread,  
a milky pleasure undulates through me like a silk worm.  
Or when I'm watching light fall through paper-thin leaves,  
so you can see the green veins. There is something about  
light and shadow that just, does it for me, completely.  
Whenever I need to reconnect to God, I put two of my fingers on my neck.  
Kids are graduating from college here in New York and when  
you walk around, you see them, robed and beaming, with their parents.  
If you're depressive, you'll have the afternotes of, where are the kids  
Without parents? Your imagination will convey the dark side of  
the moon, and you will fill in the gaps. Is happiness a delusion?  
I used to ask myself that during my stickiest depressive rut.  
I don't want to hover on the precipices of thoughts.  
I am drawn to the conviction that it is worth to go forward  
as though there *is* something to fight for. You're 20.  
Life isn't impossible. No one really hates you. You'll find love.  
Your greatest existential problems will be doled out and  
sorted by the end of your destiny. Under a starry night in  
the middle of Europe, two soldiers sleep in a church,  
not knowing if the war is over or not. One soldier is drawn,  
emotionally moved, by the writing inside of the church.  
His emotional register is heightened by morphine in his gums.  
Sometimes I see something beautiful and I think,  
if only I had the emotional range for this right now.  
I feel the computational processing of it, and  
I cannot coax myself into grander feelings. A compilation of  
grander feelings goes as follows: looking at your friend in  
a yellow dress marked by a sunset. A dream in which your head is so heavy,

it sinks endlessly through the pillow, a cosmic slinky. Footage from the historical era, curated in a museum exhibition, so you hear the inception of jazz, overlaid with the soundlessness of Malcom X's face, the Islamic flag demonstrated behind him. Everything my parents do is highlighted by the awareness that the worst thing could happen to us at any time. A Buddhist book suggests, when Death comes in, invite it for tea. Talk to it. But the sky is blue today and I'm thinking of my parents. I never want to be far from them. It's funny how you can feel your earthly attachments as though it is a real string. Thank God I haven't reached Enlightenment. It used to disturb me that everyone was into philosophy. So all of these faces crammed into classrooms and windows, are questioning their own design? Seven billion of us were designed to question? My prayer for world peace goes as follows: the Earth was created by altercations between gravity and debris. Out of the primordial soup came creatures, bug-eyed ones, ones with tentacles, ones in hot swamps, ones that dart and have ten limbs and alien features. Everything that happens in reality is a cosmic miracle. It will never stand the test of time and yet it is almost infinite. I was designed for this world. Everything is a miracle, it's the way that light makes shadow, that really does it for me.

## JULY

And I believe everything will be okay for a moment but then the past bubbles up behind me.  
Putting almond-scented body lotion on the backs of my hands and kissing my fingers,  
I touch my wrist, the same one, with sweetly scented lotion and begin crying,  
Remembering moments when I treated this body as a fault.  
I didn't want to have to carry my past,  
But the fan above me swirls like bob-eyed fish and it's summer which means the air  
We move through is sticky scented and heavy like jasmine-drenched clouds.  
There is always a bead of sweat bringing me deeper and deeper into the belly of summer,  
a place where I nearly can't breathe for the sake of it anymore.  
July rolls up in pools of sweat and it's like every ghost from my past rises up in my belly  
And splashes to the surface of my mind, their hollow white faces gleaming like unwanted fish,  
Flopping on the shores of my destiny. I didn't ask to return to the darkest depth with you,  
I didn't ask for your face to continue to embroil along the beaches of my brain.  
I didn't ask to relive the moments I followed you like a lost puppy into the darkest woods.  
Summer beats down on me like the black blades of a fan illuminated by nothing.

A girl meets me outside like a silver bird landing in my imagination.  
I'm not foolish enough to track her flight through my life.  
I watch her move through my life as temporary as anything.  
There's something about her that slinks by and in the natural silences between us,  
I think about the perfume of summer nights and how I live through my life,  
Completely and utterly drugged by tranquilizing potion.  
Looking at beauty in the eyes is enough to make me a tame being,  
looking at the slick tips of the crescent moon is enough  
To cast my body kneeling, my voice kneeling, my eyes closed in deference.  
Hands behind my back, the silver birded girl and I talk.  
We step around one another lightly, careful not to step on each other's tails,  
the way old cats laze in the sun, batting eyes.  
Summer is this rush of creation and disassembly,  
this silver-bladed poison of serenity and sadness.

## SUMMERTIME LOVE POEM

A beam of sunlight by our ankles.  
I want to speak to you on another level, let me?  
Hand in hand, open conduit.  
Dark pink blossom from the center of my mind.  
Sprouting outwards like a petunia or a mango tree.  
I feel our souls become Ultimate.  
Fuse into one.  
Everything we touch turns into purple and dripping honey gold.  
The clouds above are like a vision.  
We are on an island stranded and the sky above us breaks open  
And streams down in gushing white light.  
We are stranded on an island and the white afternoon sun  
Is blaring down on us, beating down on us.  
We are stranded in the ocean, on the bed, the cream-colored bed,  
Gushing out sound and pushing through waves and waves.  
The bridge in the far-off distance looks like a postcard.  
I want to take a picture so it lasts forever.  
The rain beats down on us and purifies.  
Water pooling in the parts of my body that are rock hard solid.  
There are an infinite amount of dolphins meeting us by this river.  
And the sky puckers pink and turns the river into a light pink well of rose water.  
And in this world, where both ends of the horizon stretch out into infinity,  
We are cosmic travelers, armed and ready to walk towards the skyline.  
There is an iteration of us forever walking toward the New York City skyline.  
There is an iteration of us on a planet where we're dancing in the rain.  
And we come back to our Earthly bodies and remember the vitality.  
And remember the fluidity of it, how lithe the body feels underwater.  
This is the stuff of creation, I say, looking at the drops of water on our body.  
This, this is water, this is water. Coming down from the Heavens to meet us.  
I feel my hair carry the river. Honey days pool up to my ankles.  
It could be sunrise. Looking out at the ship in the distance, under the bridge,  
By the swaying tree, blanketed by black rain. We could be anywhere.

## REVELATION

In upstate New York, in a wooden cabin with slants of sunshine,  
I fold myself on the floor in prayer. The words I speak are marbles  
Swirling in my mouth. The prayer I send makes a clink as it falls  
Into a jar in the lap of God and in approximately sixteen to eighteen  
hours, neurons in the brain of my older brother will finally reveal  
Their inherent defect and will let out a parting cry of magnetic current  
In his temporal lobe, and he will be pushed by electricity, into  
Stupor and loss of speech. Talk to me about the moment that the  
Cells of your body reveal themselves to you, the moment that a  
Spool of DNA unwinds and you finally parse through its language,  
Sifting through eons and eons of nucleotide bases.  
Hailey finds God through the animacy of wind through leaves.  
Wind through the branches. Wind through the branches,  
I repeat to myself whenever I hear a ripple of breeze.  
A part of my inner thigh keeps twitching and when I look down  
At my skin and see it pulse without my control, I imagine that  
It is a second heart beating under my skin, or maybe it is  
A small animal trapped within me. I hold myself back from  
Saying everything I want to say because I am afraid I am not allowed.  
The instinct to cut comes from a deep desire to know the assembly  
Of the body. If I could cut out a piece of skin from my inner thigh,  
And release the small creature waiting underneath, I would.  
On days punctuated by darkness, I simply do not wish to exist anymore.  
The act of living and being constantly stimulated by the environment,  
Fails to move me. I am starting to get excited about my death, I think.  
I wouldn't mind watching my consciousness dismantle towards the end.  
I have a dawning suspicion that towards the end of my life, my brain  
Will reveal itself to me, and I will be blindly and painfully aware of the  
Secrets of my existence. The veil will part and I'll see, really see this time.  
Crying is good because at least it is an expression of water.  
Lying in her lap by the ocean, I feel warmth and animal joy, my  
Head being nuzzled and my arms enveloped in glow. I look at my  
Shadow and see the curls of my hair blow, and it looks like the shadow  
Of a lioness in a savanna, looking down at the world below. I look

At the shadow for so long that I can almost convince myself, that  
I am a lion, not a woman. I am poetically moved by the revelation from the  
Qu'ran in which Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) meets an angel in a cave.  
The angel grabs his wrists so hard that it hurts, unbelievably. The angel  
Says, Read, Read, Read. He says, I can't. I don't know how.  
The angel presses down on his wrists even harder, says Read, Read, Read.  
This time he finds that he can. Sometimes I feel the angels grabbing  
My heart and squeezing it so tightly I feel my airway is constricted.  
I feel a divine pain compress me into my most base particles.  
On these days, breathing is a chore. Read, Kiran. Read.  
What do I read? What would you want me to read for you?  
If God gave me a book written in any language, I would read it for Him.  
But I do not know if God is listening. In an attempt to rid myself  
Of my body, I sharpen my senses with a knife. Except I told myself,  
I wouldn't do it anymore, and I pledged it to the night sky, knees  
In the grass, and that was a sacred vow. I vow myself to my body the way  
A man ties himself to a tree. I vow my soul to my body the way  
The sky vows itself to the stars it holds. I wish this felt as beautiful  
As it sounds. On my worst days, I either want to smash my guitar  
Or become my guitar. I have freakish identity issues. The acoustic  
Reverb of the guitar is so beautiful I want to become the frequency  
Of sound and move through the air. My fixations are as precise as they  
Are accurate. I fixate on dust beams and on sounds that originate  
From the deepest part of the chest. I take back what I said about my body.  
Because I love how it houses my heart. Maybe the body is only as  
Good as the beat it holds. I want the cells of my heart to syncopate  
Their rhythm with the sound of this song. Maybe in my first life,  
I was a scrap of music that dissolved like sugar into the wind.  
Maybe my human consciousness first came from a song.  
How else to explain the desire to reunite with the beloved,  
when the opening instrumentals play. Desire so strong it hurts.  
The bird and I look at the clouds row through the night sky  
With strong arms. I show her a cloud that glows, is still  
illuminated by the last rays of sunlight and her eyes freckle.  
I wish this was enough to get a hold of me when I'm like this.  
I wipe away the tears of my beloved as she cries in joy in front of me.



I feel her heartbeat when I hold her in my arms. She seems to me then,  
So small, a bird in flight, nestled between me. I toy around with days  
And watch divinity resurface, but my body craves complete communion.  
I want to blend in with the merging days and I want to submerge myself  
In starlight and music. I wish to be a hummingbird so I could whittle out a tune.  
My understandings of the cosmos are as precise as they are painful.  
I feel the last remnants of Cupid's arrow, piece through my heart.