

Fall Reverie

To Our Health

A glass of vermouth,
Heavy and strong,
Waits on the table.
Contemplating to drink
Is a game that teeters
Back and forth
With me on the losing side,
Aromatized with roots and flowers
And seeds and spices.

It is hard not to drink a garden,
Tending to its flavor,
Sipping on its alluring tendrils,
Lapping it up like a dog.
I wish I could bottle the smell
To hold onto it for later
When a glass is truly needed,
To spray it on my cuffs like perfume.
It breaks barriers; incites conversation.
How else could I talk to a stranger
Waiting for the bus on 5th and 3rd.

The park across is one giant pour,
Spilling onto the sidewalk,
Cemented in paths for the nose
As howls come from men
To buy me another drink.
Perhaps I should have one more.
What kind of harm really comes
From stepping on the cracks?
My mother died years ago.
My father did, too.
Now they own a place in Worcester—
Like cold clams clustered
Indoors by the dying fire.

But I spill in a few more drops
Of kindling into my cup for warmth.
The heat hasn't been turned on in days now.
It hardens you, the cold,

Reshapes the definition of grit,
Bearing down teeth on a New York winter,
To run to the home of an old bodega
To plead for a couple more
Overdone dogs:
Crinkled wurst with vibrant yellow tang.
An exchange of compliments
Is shared with my clerk,
Allowing me to withdraw
From human pain once more.

I share a drink with him
To our health,
Or what's left of it,
And to what is not yet lost,
Restlessly tumbling
In our sheets every night,
Trying to find what is missing
In a warm bottle of vermouth.

Glass Lakes

I remember the thunder
That spoke in broken truths,
Whispering for you to leave
To where I could not reach;
To not turn around and look at me;
To protect you from the rain.

Then lightning flashed,
Like it missed its cue.
And you turned in shock,
Feinter than the cologne
On the cuff of my coat.

Falling like rain to puddles,
You were a baptism for the ground,
Of blood and body forgotten,
Carried downstream to become
Another row of water.

And when thunder came to rumble again
Paced in uneven pulses,
I remember when I was you,
And you were I:
A reflection of drops
Before shattering a lake of glass—
In shock.
Then remorse.
To relief.

To Restore

There is a room I've found
The books have a film of mold—
Mildew of disuse.
Dust imbued in air;
Thick in lungs,
Like inhaling smoke.

Chipped plates and vases,
Sit wearily on a credenza
Filled with brittle rose,
Desiccated in pairs,
Waiting to fall to cold, tan tiles.

Coffee stains engrained on seats,
Lost of its warmth when I sit.
Springs perforate the cushions
Like emaciated bone on flesh
Trying to escape its thin enclosure.

When was the last garden party?
Tables strewn with real champagne
And silver placed pleasantly,
Now flung to corners to rust.
And chairs once tucked away,
Now displaced and splintered.

I'm sure laughter and exclamations
Bustled beside the fireplace,
Fluming the flames,
Now replaced by anachronisms,
Disorder of the lost decades.

And where has the door gone?
Covered in the same, peeled paper.
To come and not remember
Where I was before.
To encircle a maze with no end.
When will it all end?

But a hammer sits on a desk,
Along with new paint
And erect bristles on brushes.

There is work to be done,
But where do I begin?

To Remember

Planted roots of aphasia—
Robbed of words;
Replaced by silent hesitations.

To speak up is to die,
In raspy iterations of desperation—
Calling out to an empty chamber.

To try and regain the voice
Is to risk losing it altogether,
Living in muted contemplation.

But in this exposed convalescence
Is the consideration of the self;
An act of bravery;

To die in silence is not cowardly.
But to live in the noise,
Absorbing every despotic note,

Is to love; to live; to remember.
To love the moments that create strength,
To live beside the thoughts of loathing,
To remember, to remember, to remember,
All that it is we are here to do.

To Tame

The heat of wild horses
Washed in antipathy
For the taming of the whip,
To lick fur from skin.

Nine tails sink teeth
Into flesh, whipped out.
Hollow breath ejected
Into morning chill.

Dew droplets reflect
Their early apprehension—
Fear stricken in the gloss
Of their dilated eyes.

Leather heaped on,
Carrying the weight.
Trotting with no self-intention:
Beauty bent; broken.