

A Prayer for Restless Bones

One morning his bones are restless,
so he leaves the house before dawn.
He meaning you. Yes. He gets in the car,
drives around as the hours stir
and thicken. The streets are shining,
but the day is too bright, so he goes
to the corner diner. *Could be a hangover.*
Could be heartbreak. He only wants
simplicities: a counter stool, the coffee
black, the waitresses painted like dolls.
His hands slide easy into ordinary days,
but his voice? His voice will not cease,
just vanish. *So silence makes him nervous?*
Silence is what he runs from, and light
streaming unbroken through a window.
He wants to be brave, to crucify. He wants
to be a martyr, to sacrifice. Perhaps--
it would be something to write about--
but nails remind him of squirming
in the pews. *So now we're back to the restless*
bones. No safe place to kneel, the prayers
unspoken for. *He prays?* He prays all day,
but his voice only vanishes. He dreams
his way around the world, but his feet
keep turning into stone. *Tell me more.*
Tell me what you really wanted. A crowded
room, a shared cigarette. *He sees a beautiful*
man, and the curtain begins to fall. He sees
a beautiful man, and wonders what's
inside. What's wrong with wondering?
Do you know what you are? Only what
everyone is: a little dust, a little light,
and lust the whole way through. *Well then.*
So you think he's a coward. *He loves his mother;*
he loves his father, but it doesn't matter.
He's voiceless. He raises his eyes,
his mouth begins a prayer, he calls
for another cup of coffee.

Season

What I remember of that season--the fitful days,
the sky undecided for sunlight or for rain--

what I remember is how the sunlight washed over
his body, the way he moved like rain.

Folly Island, South Carolina

Follow my song down Folly Road
and I'll meet you on the dunes at the end of South Carolina.
Trace the veins in my hands, imagine they're rivers,
imagine swimming in the dark waters, something shining
beneath the waves. I know I once said your body is the shore,
my hands the ocean, but these metaphors have a way
of shifting faces--so now you're a hearthside,
now I'm a wildfire, now I'm the king of these vanishing islands,
while you're a jester in the palm trees trying to make me laugh
with a joke I've heard a thousand times before. I only wanted
to pass this with you, to walk forward through the tide of days:
mornings in June, September afternoons, the rooms
of sky and light. *So long, lonesome*, murmured the heart
gone quiet, hands open beneath the rain. Is this how it begins,
the seasons we spoke of, the plans we once made?
Is this where my long war ends, boarding the ship of dreams
with you beside me in the night? It's a high school dance,
it's a battlefield: the girls in their gowns, the boys in the ties
their fathers tied, you standing in the corner, you in the shirt I love,
you smiling in a way that fills my heart with sunlight,
while outside the sky rips apart. We'll watch Carolina rising.
Bones reined against the tide. We will not ask to be forgiven.

The Rising River

The air is glass. Leave the window open wide, and I'll tell you how the daylight is its own kind of prayer. I'll tell you the secrets you mutter in sleep. You dream of rain, and morning is breaking. You dream of my hands, and your river heart is rising. The brown water at my ankles, my knees, my groin, the green waters at my chest dragging me under. My bones on the riverbed, my bones on the sea floor, how the sun torn waves brought the light crashing through. We could cross these oceans in an afternoon if you'll just let me sit beside you, mapping your veins onto the book of my hours. This taste of salt, that nearing shore, the shadows of gulls that rise above this bed. You wanted a prayer? Sure enough: *Hail Mary full of grace. Hail Mary full of birds. Our Father who art dust and light.* I was not ready for this: the body known, the room gone white, and I'm trying to remember how it feels to begin. How would you describe it? the chair by the window? an unchartered deep? rain, and a rising river? We may be monsters, but we have been brave, we have had the darkness ripped from our eyes. My albatross, my open water, don't be afraid to wake up. I'll be right here. Don't be afraid. I'm right here. Wake up.

Ancient Light

It is hard, he said, to rise each morning
with the dawn. Not the waking itself,
but the steady tide of days. Each one
another page that says: He's gone.

It is good, you said, to leave the windows
open wide. Makes the daylight seem rather
neighborly, an ordinary kind of prayer.

It is right, I said, what they told me love
contains. So much cricketsong and ancient light.