

Hearth

Her palms drag through the cold,
two winters embed in smooth skin.
Oak. Umber. Sepia.
The day's rain haunts fingertips.
Strands of roots replace the memory of
old, easy days; restore hollow impressions.
His charcoaled stones left behind,
found lodged in shoes. Sinking between
cracks. The ripples of his footprints stain
mossy rugs and rickety floorboards:
smudging half-hearted attempts at
steadiness. Her hands, muddied by
yesterdays, ease towards
the bathroom sink: lavender soap.

July

i.

I shatter my eardrums to love songs you showed me
months ago with melodies that echo

like your sleepy Sunday morning voice
and lyrics that sound like a letter I could've
written you in my sleep.

For hours I'm highway humming,
truck trailer tracking,
streetlight staring –

I trace the constellations in the sky with my eyes
until I find replicas of the chocolate freckles
that scatter your shoulder blades,
the moon lays in the sky like your hands on my waist:
soft and calm and orbiting.

I watch the hills rolls and the sounds fade:
muffled farmland to city lights,
pale yellow hills turn to emerald mountains
the color of your eyes in the dark.

ii.

We're crammed in a room that's stuffy and too small.
I'm drowning, I'm falling, I'm

picking up the pieces
you left scattered on the floor.
Shards of glass and empty flower pots
poke holes in my shoes and scar the arches of my feet.
With every step I'm locked in those words
you whispered in the shadows and let fizzle
when the sun rose and the lights flicked on.

You threw me headfirst into that black hole trapped
between your ribs. Tumbling,
with bruises appearing around my neck
and blood seeping from between my fingers
you walked on, taking reckless steps
and feeding that dark part of your head
I thought I could illuminate with my own.

iii.

It's foggier, it's all foggier —

some nights
I'll wake with a sinking feeling in my chest:
remembering the ways you pushed my hands
further from my face and into your mattress
until I fell asleep,
cheap tastes and soft words still
tiptoeing across my lips, haunting my eardrums,

— the way mist lingers after downpour,

the rain hangs in the air and
pools in the heels of my chuck taylors,
soaked in old poison.

The roses on my porch wilt from leftover
drops slipping off the edges of their petals,
and the wisps of clouds shift from
mute grey to vibrant, blinding white.

The Stranger

Like clouds, hot smoke
rises above the street.
He leans against the cracks
in the wall, his grey
eyes following the black
pavement where his shoes

meet the other shoe
prints. Flickers of grey
light seep between cracks
in the dark black
alleyway. The street
crushes the smoke

from the end of his smoked
cigarette. The black
matches hidden in his shoe
light a new stick of grey.
A smile cracks
his face, the street

absorbs him. He sits in the street.
His fingers lock and crack.
Pouring from his lips, the smoke
billows towards the grey
clouds. His eyes meet his shoes.
In the distance, black

steam rises, black
stacks that reach above the street,
above his shoes.
Farther still, a smoked
crow flies into the grey
clouds. A heavy crack

goes through the sky, cracks
of light hit the sky, rain scatters the street,
leaving his aged shoes
soaked through. His grey
eyes meet the clouds and go black
from the smoke.

He rises. His shoes hit the cracks
In the dying street made grey
From the smoke; the clouds of black.