

Construction

They sold the lot next door last month,
the one with the tree, the tree my daughters climbed
during the mercilessly long, stagnant summers,
made their cradle in, read their books,
the tree whose branches overgrew the property line and
kindly shaded our breakfast table, the table where
my husband and I would sit wordless but
for the comforting distraction of a flash of leaves
or the merciful scratching of branches.

It came down more quietly than any of us expected;
one day we simply noticed that we had poured our orange juice
in a spot of warm sun.

“We won’t be a bother,” the foreman had said from over the fence
when I was pulling tomatoes that Wednesday, the last time
I saw that tree.

But you will, I should have said.

Tuesday Morning on the Way to Rehab

I want to print this to a large sheet of memory, let the dots
spit you out in just this way, the way you sleep now
against the dirty window, an unknowing sunrise
exploding in the pale space beyond your bent,
shaggy head, or maybe three years ago when
your life was only beginning to fall apart,
and I still thought there were so many
chances, so many chances for you.

We must hurry, now. You are
changing fast, reducing.

By sunset you will be
well beyond this
picture, just
that much
farther
away
from
you,
me.

Ways We May Have Been Wrong

I am watching your sister through the window, waiting for the bus. The rising sun behind her has caught her in such a way that the space around her has been set afire. I step away, intending to pick up the camera in hopes of a picture, but then stop, and decide only to just be present.

You are not here and today is your birthday. I remember the day, I think it was in the second grade, that I sat waiting on the front stoop for your school bus to arrive, and when it did you ran so fast down those steps and up the walkway to where I sat, and breathlessly cried, *my friend died yesterday*. He was seven and had only been walking home, only walking home, and then collapsed. And that was that. I remember feeling as we clung together, and I think you did, too, that this is what made life the scariest thing.

When I was pregnant with you, had just begun to round out in the belly, my back pulling in to follow it, I wrote you a poem. It was rough, I was young, only twenty. But it was about you and I, and how the world wasn't going to be the same now. Not just for us but for anyone. We were going to change it all. I still believe that, though maybe not in the quite the same way.

When your bed is made, today, when they have finished with you, given you your dosage and cup of water and sent you out into that bright room, please call. I'll sing.

Occlusion

I take a swipe at your tight face
pull it back, brush the dusting off—
you were 22, then
your bright smile
dark and
your eyes
anemic, nearly
gone.

I pinch hard to
bring you back, and
by and by with care, I try
to pull you forward, out into
this very particular
particular light,
this place I have shaded
by not shading,
drawn by drawing around you,
more screened, more diffuse,
really,
than chiaroscuro.