

Hair Day

Sunset Waterfall

Behind fading clouds always burns
the western angled sun.
She over commits red promises
to auburn tangled runs

of hair that glow a moment like
a sunset waterfall.
And cowlick branches grow from spill
rocks in the orange squall.

Reality crashes there from
a looming widow's peak
against a too tall neck where ripped
hairs grip knotted to each

other and blush with cheeks turned red
thinking they could hold on
when water's true color is clear.
The sunset sheen is gone

when dawn convinces that no comb
can coax rose bubbled waves
to shoulders absent feminine charm.
Absent the hope she gave.

Hair Day

1.

Every sixth-grade night my pillow
would sculpt showered-wet clay hairs,
the same range of shades,
into a solid tornado

rolling over what felt like perpetually
the next not even morning,
those days when I first discovered
the snooze button.

Cowlicks argued with a comb
trying to convince unkempt waves
spiking from above, behind my ears
that we've left the bed

6 A.M. bus stops are so unnatural
that my hair wouldn't brighten
the way it shines in the sun
from brown to auburn-orange.

2.

Throughout the day in high school
I would keep a comb in my pocket.
The one-floor school had two redheads,
and I wasn't the one that left Junior year
for her modeling career. I was the other
stereotype: the acned nerd
who plunges his head under one
of the two men's room sinks during lunch hour
when constant pocket comb adjustments
are not enough to make him pretty.

3.

I cut it shorter after an afternoon class
during newfound college freedom.

I didn't appreciate enough the reflection
I caught in passing restaurant glass

the short moment I thought, smiling,

he looks good with that haircut.

I wouldn't see myself the same way again
even if I could see myself at all.

Nights grew longer. My hair wouldn't,
but it twisted just the same

as I pulled scalp itches into
sharp pains with each group of strands.

My hair didn't recede, it retreated
freeing my rippling forehead and giving

the back of my head enough feathers
to pluck as an excuse to not leave the nest.

I didn't covet enough the last winter
moment that I could pull a tuft of hair

through the edge of my toque,
because I hate the need to hide

my hair under different hats every
winter when that memory replays

as if they would keep it held together
as if my hair would ever spill out again.

an ode to my eyebrows

I spend a lot of time
in my own
hair,
lacing my fingers
through auburn strands
combing for ideas
like an answer
for anxiety escaped
through my brain,
and if I twirl
enough around my fingers,
if I pull
enough over my ears
along with the familiar
tension of an approaching
but wavering
sharp pain
and spread the free
feathering hairs hanging
off the back of my head
far enough into the rigid air,
I'll catch
what my hands
should finally do
when they leave
with the hardened strands
inevitably pulled
for their disappointing,
no— disappearing— wisdom.

the next week's dustpan
invariably reminds me
of hairball silence
as my furrowed brow
interrogates whether the pulled hairs
being emptied
into a plastic pull release trash
can answer the questions
they were stripped for:
awkward tumbleweed clumps
say nothing
about the unread emails,
or incomplete assignments
blank on a computer screen,

or the keyboard collecting
single strands marking
single keys with
ouija board incoherence.

weighing together
with these mundane
unshedable realities
is the larger weight
of identity I rest
and wrestle with
in my hair—
yes this is about my eyebrows
we'll get to that—
I write a lot about my hair
maybe because it's constantly
tumbling in my anxious hands,
maybe because I see myself the same way—
a tangled mess with inherent beauty,
and that's a weight too:
when salon lighting
forces the hairdresser to say,
“what a beautiful color.”

I should explain that one.
in dimmer lighting my hair
looks a dull brown,
but when the light catches it,
it shines
a brilliant auburn-orange
a way that you'd think
I was a vampire
burning in the sun.

I certainly thought I would
those clockwork
locked-in days
that I don't want to describe
any further than that
except how my hairline
started to recede
and how I blamed
myself for that.
I blamed
myself for the depression
but I don't want

to focus on that
because I swear
I'm getting to the point
about how I lost
the possibility of beauty.
I blamed myself for
a receding hairline
that I felt fading in each
sudden collection
of hairs scattering
into an image
of masculinity,
a word
that I can't reconcile
with beauty,

and as my hairline rose
it presented more space
to weigh down on my brow
because each of these lines
since I first furrowed my brow
is a weight
pressing the heavy tension
further until
the fuzzy barrier
presents itself
at the top
of my eyesight,

and I'm reminded
that I can push back
with the strength
of those dark bushes
that are—
and here's the thesis—
nothing like my hair.

My eyebrows know
what they want to be.
they're solid, dark, dark
brown bars,
and I don't lament
the constancy
like I dread the limited
direction of my hair.
it's not strength

that gives me solace,
nothing so masculine,
it's control.

a control
existing in the contradiction
of its masculine connotation.

a control that gives me solace
about the uncontrollable:
a depression
that was,
supposedly,
at fault
for the retreating hairs
whose beauty was never mine
to control.

a control that lets me raise
both brows independently
to question silently
anything any way I want.

a control that declares beauty,
however masculine.

a control that can wave
them up and down
in a way that nobody
has appreciated
but me.

and I don't want them to
"appreciate" my eyebrows
the way they do my hair,
the mysterious they,
the same they
that I imagine
judging whether my hair
lives up to its beauty
every day.

I just can't hate
the dirt colored simplicity
of my eyebrows
the way I hate

my elephant ears
or my giraffe neck,
and there are a million
kindergarten insults
that can be thrown
at my eyebrows too,
but they won't make me
pull them off,
they'd just press down
into a look
that reassures me
how ridiculous those
words sound.

My eyebrows are not beautiful,
and I don't give a shit,
and the beauty is in how
I can know of how crude
how dim, how void
of conventional beauty
they are every time
I move them around
my balding face
and not feel that furrowing weight.

Imagine

Imagine you're growing hair in all the wrong places.
Imagine, I don't know,
strands sticking right out of the bridge of your nose
or the strangest Hobbit tufts out of your finger nails
Imagine, please do,
that it grows everywhere but where you need the warmth,
and it grows.
Are you imagining?
Please do.
Because it grows
into the color of home,
wherever that is for you,
it grows warm and bold and
iridescent
with renewing shades
of an evolving beauty
that glows all the colors
of loving yourself.
But don't stop imagining where it grows
because it falls out
where you need it most.
I'm talking about your body.
Imagine it creeping, reaching to fill out
full impressive patches right where
your body needs its own beauty,
but falls short.
Because it falls out.
And imagine, please do
that you can never shave
those imperfect reminders
of what could have been (a body that should have been beautiful)

and then you'll understand why I'm always writing about my hair.