

POST MORTEM

Dreaming, not sleeping

Watercolor swathes

I break apart

and piece back together

my mother

In my mind

Her head splitting open,

red flooding

a blooming burst in the mirror

positioned just for me

to get a better angle

of burst arteries and split skin

Where the scar is barely visible now

kissing the side

near my mother's scalp

Was I meant to see this?

The child who I was

sat to see what's on stage

sun glinting on glass my spotlight

car horns morphing

crescendoing
into cries
of a crowd

Years later
when I sleep
nightmares begin
in cars
and end
in shattered glass
and shrapnel.

A name is a prayer if repeated enough

She reaches towards me
with soft fingers,
sure in their path.

A breath
cradled
by the wind

Moonlight.

The only name
she gives me.

Her cool eyes
miss nothing
drowning the earth
with the light
from her skin.

There's no warmth,
but no cold either.

She is seen
but can't be touched
by people
or gods
in my mind.

A wavering stain-glass
passing, unfolding
upon the throbbing cheek
of my heart

I plead
for her to stay,
watch her turning
slow and deep,
an ocean wave

dripping brilliant blue
and foamy white
she slips across
the sky's
dark curtain,
away.

Some nights
she is shy,
shrouding her face
in clouds.

Some nights
she is the sky,
absorbing everything
as I stand
dazed, quiet
below.

Under the oppressive sun's
blistering heat
I remember her smile.
Days wrinkle me,
grinding my soul
between
rough knuckles

Just before
I crumble, splinter, shatter
bread broken
in a calloused fist,
night comes.

Rhythmic as breath to lungs,
she comes back to me.

Her glow carries me through the streets.
The expanse of her spills
over my room, across white sheets.

“Why must you go?”

I ask each time
my hands dangling
towards the floor.

Her smile stuns me
into silence again,
brightness smothering
where mine lacks.

I get the same fluid shrug.

“Isn’t my return enough?”

It’s been a while...

Fringes of desire
dangling
from our shared gaze

live wire, dripping water...

I know
my lips have touched yours
There exactly,
where my eyes continue
to trail...

Time stretches between us
Watch it now pressed flat
in a single smile,
press of the mouth.
Still, I remember.

Conversation. A recollection.
Past warmth billowing

Do you feel it too?

Or am I
alone in this?

Shudder, blink,
climb out of this burning
to will my throat to answer
Your simple question.

There are people everywhere
And to them, all they can see
is two people talking
All I know is this.

No longer atheist, but your secret thing

In this world
where gods have been ground into ash
my tears, scraped knees
and trembling prayers are for you.

The tenderness of my soul

a place to return,
my face in your neck
and yours above my heart.

I can't forget you,
so I worship your memory
a formless idol.
Service took place in a room sweet with sweat
I remember everything we said and wrote

they are my scriptures
smoothed by weary fingers on the wall.

Burns your kisses ripped from my skin
cooled by your gentle touch and breath

At the mercy of your eyes
I remembered that I believed in divinity once,
and now again

You made this selfish woman
a pious man.

The Undertow

My life had become a great churning,
milky gray as the eyes of my dog
inky pools of cataracts that swelled with age,
swallowing the sharp brown jewels
that used to hold the glow of the sun
like wax, like honey, like clasped hands.

Time had left all but his ears untouched.

Gray speckled them,
but still they remained rich brown and soft.
He could not hear us
and probably saw his family now
as elusive shadows

that only smelled like us.

I whittled my steps softer so as not to startle him.

In fleeting moments, I'd admit that I could not see the dog I grew up with
who had seen me as a child, a trembling one himself, round cathedrals of brown
peering through the gates of his kennel,
flown in from Oklahoma.

I felt such dissonance now, faced with what my life had become
the quilt of my youth unraveled
Leaving me standing in a dim stairway,
holding loose threads
that now dangle uselessly in the wind.

Silent wind chimes
their music not reaching
my ears that rang
from the constant barrage of life and sound.

When he dies, he will also see something else
someone other
than who he had met as a child.

As we walk the same road we always have,
a short block that brushes against my old bus stop
a thought sinks in like the night

swift and dark

that maybe it is myself

that I no longer recognize

in his eyes.