

Stories From My First Apartment

Performers

They watched him walk to the blackboard,
chittering from behind.
Eyes drifting towards him
At the same speed as
Magnets snap
, quivering, together.
Expecting the correct answer
To spill from his lips.

You ever stood there, under stage lights?
Really stood there,
In pirouetting dust,
The house in front of you dark,

ba-dump.
ba-dump.

Your back on fire
Your face on fire,
The curtain of expectations sweeping across the room
As the stage's robe falls away

ba-dump.
ba-dump.

Really stood there,
Fully naked
Save for stage-makeup
Armor?

He turns from the blackboard,
In graphite eyeshadow
Chalkdust foundation,
Eyes sweeping,
Answer delivered.

ba-dump.

Reflection Ghazal

Forgive my derailed appearance, I am searching for my reflection.
My quest began in uneasy locker rooms where I could not find my reflection.

I have searched in polished mirrors, silver spoons, glittering windows
Seeing not myself, only the distant sun's dazzling, blinding, reflection.

In the red ink of exams, in my collapsed cup on the potter's wheel,
In my messes I cannot contain, I avert my eyes- afraid to find my reflection.

I tell myself only in dust-free rooms, perfect pressed collars, fluttering speech,
Will I be enough for the world to grace me with a reflection.

When my identity made my father laugh, reaching awkwardly for a drink
I decided that my insides, my bright red guts, were not worth reflection.

Have I always been the different one, my style and my stance set apart?
Young me swore it was warped mirrors that simply bent my reflection.

Pain is a tiring thing; I am trying to be kind to myself, to speak softly.
Forgive my derailed appearance, I am searching for my reflection.

On a Random Tuesday Evening

As I brushed my teeth,
Window-fan begging for death,
The trees moaned,
Bent in a wind that spoke
Nothing of relief.

So you know I could not go
Under that crushing weight
Of linen and wool;
My mother, she picked out the pattern,
My father, he carried it home.

When I was little I feared
The boogeyman's gaze
If I did not hide under the covers.
And so I hid,
Smothered by heat,

Tracing the pattern of my parents
Again and again in the night.

I stare in the mirror now,
And think of the fear that bound me,
I know the linens are ripping;
I snap the last thread without fanfare.

I spit out my toothpaste, rinse out the taste,
Walking straight past
The blanket-bound bed.

I throw open the front door
And make ready to sleep
Under a blanket of stars;
A weight of my own choosing.

Sonnet from the Precipice

You forgot to live hard, to live deeply;
Your sneakers never knew the mud fields of May,
Your list of aspirations never quite found itself finished,
Your niece's muffins grew moldy on the counter.
It was quite impressive really, to watch it all go down,
The jack of all trades, master of average,
Loosing a bone-shattering cry in the night
Before clocking in 9 a.m. sharp the next morning.
I think you wanted to live, and wanted to love
So hard, you were frightened by the scope of it all.
I watched you get lost in the sky once,
Awed and immobilized by that unending blue.
You've too much life left for your verbs to stagnate;
There's time to change grew to still growing—

A Radiator's Final Lullaby

You hummed as you worked,
Drawing in rattling breaths as you tried
To keep this home from freezing over
(I sat chilly, but didn't say a thing).
You did your best, puffing until you turned red.

You sang me to sleep
As I cried over girls and grades,
Attempting the role of my reliable friend,
Sputtering an apology when you broke down.

But I cannot afford them now,
The maintenance man, the gas bills.
Not when there are sleek and cheap electrics.

Please understand, my oldest friend,
But I could not bear to keep your corpse.

Forgive me.