

*Cosmic Klutziness*

There's a dip and a sway to the hips, a grace and a glisten that I don't think I'll ever master.  
Because I bump about the universe, clumsily, with two left feet.

And stubbed toes and bruised shins aren't the only consequences, I've learned.  
There are broken hearts and wounded prides as well – and Band-Aids only go so far.

It's not just my fault, I'll contend for the sake of argument and thought.  
There are surprise table legs and awkward encounters,  
Things I didn't prepare for in my preview of the day.

Yet, somehow others have mastered that swirl away from disaster,  
They've found a way to live easy, to kick back, to mush the malleable world to their form.

But I never was good at ceramics.

Vulnerability was more my strong suit.  
And self-deprecation when that fails.  
Because to laugh at oneself is the strongest shield, the greatest defense possible.

And I'm in need of a good one what with my sore knees and twisted ankles from whacking into  
the world again and again.

Fall, learn, get back up, repeat. (Some bullshit someone said, someone else believed, and a third  
mass-produced on t-shirts and coffee mugs and now the whole world is eating it.)

*On Ancestry and Existence*

Rootless, I look between pages,  
In the navel of maps of Africa,  
In photo albums, in ancient yearbooks,  
For an origin story.

There's King Leopold, a brutal conqueror  
With a better-kempt Tolstoy beard and a sagging complexion.  
Belgium, he reigned. Congo, he razed.  
I search his eyes for a glint of my uncle's gap-toothed smile.

The story of roots, the beginnings of me and mine, I've memorized.  
Yet, black holes – darker than Great Grandma Lolita's and my eyes –  
still serve as sticking spots  
in cocktail conversation.  
And who wants to search the cosmos knowing all to be found is hurt and broken spectacles?

One of the world's most difficult words to translate, ½ of my surname.  
And, writing this, I smile at the dry irony.  
For I am the first to bear my name; I am as untranslatable as family history.

For in pain, there is a glint of future joy.  
For in Belgium, there are waffles.

*Patriotic Vices*

I guess it's time to write about you.  
Because I haven't seen you in two weeks (let's be Elizabethan; call it a fortnight)  
And absence makes the writing grow stronger.

I'm forgetting already, the way you were  
then, to me, a younger version with brighter eyes but less hindsight.

Lofty, although you'd hate to be called that.  
Both in terms of height (I used to crane my neck to see your thoughts.)  
and in terms of expectations  
of others, not yourself. A vice, the first of many.

Many including nicotine – which, like a divorce-torn child, I now have custody of –  
and Budweiser (lofty not in terms of taste)  
and tits (not mine, but we'll get there).

Remove my parentheticals and, above, you've got the backbone of America.  
Perhaps, that's the reason I was never enough.  
Because I've got more backbone, but less America.

*Self-Loathing*

To melt like candle wax,  
Dripping myself into a congealed, pastel pile of flesh and such...  
But I bite my tongue harder than a handshake and let the wave crash into harmless froth.

I don't remember when self-loathing first became in vogue.  
Still, I wear it like last season's handbag:  
Awkwardly, necessarily, until something better comes along.

And like scrawled pen in the margins of my mind,  
It dances, ghoulish-like, somewhere in my conscience  
to torment my third eye:

*Size up, size down, there's still so much  
matter to primp and pluck, press and push-up.*

Just sell me your panacea  
for insecurity in pop-art pink.  
A pill too large to swallow, so I shave off pieces to suck on after dinner.  
Dissolving until I am pure perfection.

To melt into a shapeless heap,  
To select the pieces I've grown to exist in,  
Stretching my black inkiness into the crevices and chinks that remain...

What color is your soul, forgotten in orgasmic reds and shimmering peach?  
To be: purely, darkly, thick as cement and impermanent as snow.  
But being isn't enough, being beautiful is a level up.

Beyond tiny pores and a good outfit, something exists.  
Perhaps not as sugary sweet as self-help books say,  
(Surreptitious in their cynicism, slipping into your soul, so submersed in saccharine.)  
But there's something.  
A state of being beyond Crayola I have yet to even approach but which, viscerally, and  
Briefly, one sleepless night I'll know.

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I think of childhood in rose, Cheever's *The Swimmer* on film.

Circles erupt out of everything,  
Never perfect, always oblong, like the bubbles with Pia or Jacqui?  
I'm back to childhood, but wavering.  
Rose can only last so long, soon it'll become brick.

Mixing a palette, I thought of summer:  
greens and blues, grays and purples  
(a fleck of yellow for that sunny walk with Phil).  
Thinking of summer, I thought of you.

Of course, things don't organize themselves into themes.  
Tack on an -ism and risk ignorance.  
If life were to pan out the way a camera does,  
we'd all have a bad side (mine's the left).

And I strive for symmetry, no matter the consequences.  
Curious about the relative velocity I cannot perceive --  
except for in reflective surfaces and personality quizzes --  
I screamed for you to save me from brick.

But dental hygiene might be the only thing we share.  
Minty fresh, perhaps, but mixed with orange juice;  
bitterer than ever, a double entendre too obvious to explain.  
I think of childhood in rose until I no longer can.

Risking a bump in the night, I reorganize my bookshelf at 1 AM.  
You'll never guess what I find:  
*The Swimmer* on film and  
The Future in blue slacks, a scarf, and a straw hat.

If repetitive thuds mark our existence, how are we doing it?  
The palette I mentioned, it slipped out of my grasp and  
landed face-down with a splat like death.  
An oblong color wheel with no rose, only brick.

So, you see, circles erupt out of everything,  
although themes don't come like file cabinets.  
I lost my keys and my mind that night  
and I hit brick and saw rose, not stars.

"If I wrote an epic, would you read it?"  
instead of "Marry me?" because I'm a contrarian  
and dental hygiene is the only thing we share

save those repetitive thuds that mark our existence.