

The Gospel According to Danny

after David Hicks

The sky, only when it is lavender and roses, predicts the past. Its scalloped edges know the walk you take through cacti-sprinkled ground, the sun burning beside you. December has never been to this land, has never felt sand between the toes. Your future is heat. You salivate at this thought. You think of the garden your grandfather had. It was so green and speckled with life. In the center of the wind, there was a telephone booth. Its red was chipped more each time you visited, like a dying animal. You used to sit on Grandpa's lap smelling his coffee breath and wait for him to retell the spring morning he called Grandma. He always stopped speaking at this point until his eyes weren't quite so wet-looking. He never heard her voice, but he knew it was her. He talked to her about the garden and how the sunsets tasted like her lips used to. He would think of her snoring and chuckle as he gazed at the silent tulips by his loafers separated by a wall of glass. The wind phone called him every Sunday for years, until you, my precious Danny, were born, he would say tapping your small nose. Because a child does not think of wind or time in the same way, he would say. You never understood what he was trying to explain. You stand in the desert, in the nothing. There is a wind heaving around you. It sounds like a choir. You realize that you are a cathedral. Stained glass irises and pews along your chest. You, your grandfather, the wind phone in his garden — the gospel by which you sleep.

Windchimes

"As it has been said: love and a cough cannot be concealed. Even a small cough. Even a small love." -Anne Sexton

We are
dizzy. We are
here to eat the orchids.
There are suns setting & they are on fire.

To be gentle in your new body,
to align your ashes
with lunar physics—
you were a wind leaving our air,
were one
with the moon.

We got the urn & scooped out a mason jar's worth
of your new body. But we
never looked directly at you.
Only your son felt your grit under his nails.
Your new body is also metal in the wind,
the morning song.

How Does It Arrive

How does it arrive. I arrive with makeup & a loose dress. I arrive at stairs. I arrive in the loft. The windows slant & I am not sure how long I will be able to stand. He awkwardly takes my hand. I have arrived somewhere. He arrives at the waist. He says my faded hair color is like strawberries & their rotting stems. He collects the hair. It arrives in his palm. I can tell he doesn't know how to braid. I came here & came up here to come if I could & I am on my knees & something is dripping in another room & he is thinking of how to best execute. I came here to want. I am his table. He drifts along the coastline of my spine — he says the water is calm but he is afraid to touch. Another sound & I am a circle who kicks her socks out of sight. All of his siblings arrive there in the loft. I manage to scuff my shoes onto my heels. I was the shape of a ghost. What did almost happen. My water is spilling. My legs are turning grayscale & my strawberry stem hair drips red on his plush carpet, leaving my head black. His brothers are looking at my legs like they are long smooth scoops of ice cream. One of his sisters lays on the floor beside me. Her ginger locks spark on the plush. The carpet arrives on fire — the flames engulf her & I. She is looking at my teeth. No, she is looking at my nose. I hope she does not notice a pattern in my freckles— I hate it when people see things that are not there. She lowers her eyes & the flames flash in her pupils & I cannot tell the original color of her irises. I am thinking they are maybe brown like river rocks when she takes my hand, traces the shape of my thumb & trails her finger up my arm. Where is she arriving, how is she traveling — I would ask her but my throat was closing with a deep breath I wished to hold if our lips met. Her lips do not arrive. I find a leaf in her hair with my eyes & do not tell her it is there but point & while she is searching I leave the circle of fire & arrive at stairs & arrive at ground & arrive at road & wish I knew which home would be safe to arrive at.

We Would Not Ask

she is tall & thin as a scar —
she notices me notice
her hands clenching
at her sides,
bundling up her dress like
lungs preserving air —

I wish I had a face that people
would forget. If I were
half notes on a sheet —

Sharp Things

I dreamt that you faded from my arms that I spoke at your wake that there was no going back I didn't cook very often after that & our dog would wait for you to come home in the driveway I couldn't remember how I used to fall asleep or what the morning salt stuck to my eye felt like you were one in a long line of disappearances I let my sweaters unweave themselves didn't cut the loose threads off I let them catch on sharp things as I walked because you too were a sharp thing my favorite songs helped me conjure the shape of your lips spilling words how they mouthed forces like water how a river can start & end a wound people ask how can I breathe & whenever I try to answer the air gets caught in my throat on something sharp on something gone & my mouth swallows desperately until I taste the air loosen & salt settle on my tongue & briefly, you are there.