

small game

Two dozen rubber duckies drifting on the lake,
only these are of flesh and feathers and bone—
floating blobs of brown and grey,
the yellow in their bodies
now in their bills alone.
Gliding along in their helmets of green,
warming-up for a game
I didn't know they could play.
Some dance up out of the water,
flapping and fluttering
two wings of white-bordered blue
fully out on display.
They must be stretching
I think,
excited to start,
so Pa' blows the whistle
which he calls a 'call',
and the little rubber duckies start calling right back—
so Pa' pulls the trigger to pass them the ball.

the cute girl at Starbucks

Two cups of coffee and a biscuit
are all that stand between us.
I stir through my brain
searching for something to sweep
her off her feet like spilt
Coffee.

I step forward.
Rehearsing.
My mind starts spinning
inside my skull like a blender,
slicing sentences
into
cubes of incomprehension,
until all I'm left with is an iced
C
o
f
f
e
e
of letters.

I step forward.
My brain now fully freezing over,
forgetting and fumbling,
crumbling away like a
Biscuit.

Hi, what can I getcha?
The ice melts away in my brain—
It drips down to my lips and they both start to chatter.
I stutter and stammer,
making sounds instead of words.
coffhjsgakdfsvgj.
The cat walks across the keyboard in my head
before making his way down
to finally get my tongue.

Coffee?
I nod.
She fakes a smile
so plastic
it could suffocate a sea turtle—
it'd probably hurt less if she frowned.
She jams a straw down the throat of the iced mocha she's making
and I turn into the turtle she's drowned.

no fair

Pa' holds my hand from miles above
as we pass men on stilts three times his size.
He drags me along past dancing clowns and Carousels,
licking the sugar coat off candy apples
then discarding the mushy center like a wolf wastes its prey.

He lies to me through his fillings—
wrapping me around his finger like cotton candy,
only to drop me in a puddle and watch me fade away.

My mind sits on a faulty Ferris wheel,
convinced I'm slowly spinning up
but staying in the same place.

I grip onto the same pinky that promised
me we'd ride the rollercoaster.
I want to break it in my palm
like it did its promise,
leaving pieces on the floor—forgotten like dropped popcorn.

We keep walking,
briskly past the same brick walls
we walk past every day, leaving the fun
far behind us, fading away. He unlocks the front door.
maybe another day.

He's home now,
standing out back in his green button shirt,
blending in with the rosemary bush.
I join him with a bowl of blueberries
and make my offering without a word.
He scoops up a cluster and guards them with a calloused palm—
caressing them with stubby fingers painted brown by soil and time.
he jostles them,
shakes them,
like dice.
they pile off the pads of his fingers,
tumbling in a wave of blue,
springing from cheek to tongue to cheek—
toppling teeth and lips turned blue.
globular chunks of purple and white
flash between molars.
He smiles.

- I forgive you

grandpa

I search for something amongst the freckles
speckling his rose-tinted cheeks and beauty spots.
I comb through patchy gray,
growing in all directions.
The rows of wrinkles upon his forehead
slowly rise and fall like changing tides.
I rifle through them
and scour the deep blue of his eyes with mine,
frightened of what might hide behind them;
frightened of what I'll find.

I study the space between his smile-lines,
the ones he's hardly ever used.
I see the sharpness of two lips
that drape two rows of gaps and chips,
together spitting out swords instead of words.
I see two ears too big for a face,
still growing—despite the years of things they've heard.

I want to ask them about the secrets they've stashed away;
the stories that start in sunspots
and end in strands of gray.
The ones disguised behind his eyes,
swimming in circles,
basking in blue.
I want him to read the writing
in the places where the pen bled through
his paper-thin skin—
where words have since been blurred,
carving scars and streaks across his cheeks
in spots where words once were;
leaving lines of broken poetry
in reddish pinkish hues,
concealing countless dreams deferred
below two globes of shiny blue.

I want to see his smile-lines
that slant down either side
start to rise instead of fall
and flood the room with their high tide.
I want his knifelike lips to slice the air—
to cut through me and speak,
to tell me tales he's trapped in time
behind his blemishes and streaks.

I want just one serrated smile,
through both his jagged rows of teeth,
to tell me all I need to know
and fill in every missing piece.