

Summit

Your hands spread
my skin into prisms,
the kind to last for centuries
and make them wonder
what religion used to be.

You shaped me
into steeples, arched my back,
stretched me skyward. You changed me
into a kind of Corinthian deity,
stone petals unfurling, an anthem
over my marble flags. You packed
my columns with the kind of sunlight
that settles like limestone
and anchors deep, where the creatures rub
their alien faces and float aimlessly
above the unclaimed sands,
monsoons of navy isolation.

My Prometheus, bearer of my brightness,
you carved me, and we rose
from a wrathless earth with no chains
to sing in, vultures at some other ceremony,
and I kissed your wrists and palms,
certain that this was prayer.

We'll look back from lonesome corners
of the world and worship,
remembering our first, our only.

Adultery

It can't always be like this,
coasting up ninth avenue on skyscraper hips,
every step a magnitude
and every deep street a creature
pulled taut with joy.
One pair of pupils tracks every twist
and tastes the word that trails
“tomorrow,” wondering where the three winds
came from and why,
the fourth another case of conviction.

Infidelity rusts, a copper
of busy, lazy, liar, love,
and instinct crumbles
out of unwritten driveways.
The whole affair stings
less as it spins on a core of commitment
that starts and stays out long past midnight,
wedded to what can never be worded.
The rest is exaltation,
not sky- but upward gaze that tugs
the neck, raises the eyes
and the wanting behind them.

Freedom Flies, May 1945

You had no idea who the boys were,
but they were coming back
to Brooklyn, a home you'd always had
faith in, your eight years a heart
of the "we" who had won the world.

It felt so early, still,
when your grandfather scooped
you toward him, extending a glossy jar.
You spent that night collecting fireflies,
prodigal snaps of lightning
at eye level, certain
that they, too, would come home
the moment you uncapped their cage.

They, too, would have the spread of future life
unlike the only years you could remember,
rationless, lidless, unblinking in their light.

A life cannot go down without some tragedy.

They too, would fall into the arms of an open love
spread against the sky, sailing
home in the name of a staggering goodness.

Time Zones

The years will spread us into lives
separate as pupil and iris. The gusts
will tell me I look perfect
or the Packers will be playing,
and the starlings of my mind will dip
toward the empty place that once held you.

Their feathers will crumple
and I might stop and hold one
to me, the way we looked back,
and you'll drift with the daylight,
a phantom sail catching breeze from all the harbors
we've never been to, all the bays
we somehow missed, my denim shins
booming into a reach from the no-go zone,
peering across the rumbling gulf
with a fist to shield my skin from the sun.

Maybe later, when you're awake
and feeling queasy, and she's asleep
beside you, window wide, you will rise
to end this insomniac crunch.
This was your dream: somewhere open
and breathing as we rose and fell
with the exhales and the shivering curtains.

You'll rest your head against the glass,
swear never to drink again,
the room tilting around your puffy lids
as you strain to remember what language tasted
like without vowels and I roll over,
recalling the precision with which we parted,
your spring allergies, the way you and physics
are tied, your forces, and flip
onto my left side, trying to remember your number
and tackling sleep in perfect form.

To the Second Avenue Subway

At first, I held my breath
and plunged, gouging myself
on the grime, battering
again and again. The shame
scraped deeper than I'd like to admit.

At some point I saw the you.
The city doubled and I crusaded alone,
certain of speed, my sight spread on the Q,
because I'd seen it all in you. I am my own,
for my own. The man across from me
has a square face--has he been here, have I
had this since the beginning? It's been here.
I wouldn't call it love. It was triumph

without anyone to pull me back
from the yellow line that swallows
white. The track treks over the road and we meet
in the middle, centered,
and neither of us will ever fully master
as we pass our thundering words
from palm to palm, triumphant in our roar.