

New Poems About Old Things

All My Lovers Wrens

and you scare them away
the part of you I let live in me

I leave you in no particular order

I sold one lover's necklace for \$25
and all my friends for a living room alone

I want to steamroll
over some collection of bones within me and start over

I wake up in my teenage bed
flowered wallpaper and a peeling window
after midnight and all the lights are on
and you're awake
and my door won't close

in my dreams lately
there's been a way out of the house
but you always find me before I can escape

all my lovers wrens as I am a wren full of bird bones
and they can only love me if I am seed or suet

my sister's father a bird hunter

30 years and I only ever got
one foot out the door

mother, I am your lamb, you slaughtered me
sister, you are favored, your father spilled my blood in the long grass in the back forty

and wouldn't talk to me in the car
and bellowed as the auger twisted into the pine by the compost pile
and built graves for all our dogs

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To Paint A Black Drapery

To paint a black drapery is not
vine black squeezed from the tube, but lavender
shaded with olive
and so I saw in *The Magpie* the snow all but white
rose and ultramarine shadows

read Flannery O'Connor, she said, April
is the cruelest month, do you have any idea the damage
you did to your sister? and that I continue to do
driving you to the ocean or the Pioneer Valley

like my father picking Japanese beetles off the neighbor's lilacs
all we wanted was more than two days
to finally make it west where the Nevada desert and I
held each other as cliff-sides and yellow grass rolled through July's herald

like a screen door we tear
harboring promises that should have been easy
and I didn't know the word for it
until that bend in the road

eighteen years he'd been waiting
when the Pacific was the farthest I'd ever been from her

all we asked was two days, another eighteen years, sister,
she made me wait for you

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In the Time After Pestilence We Spin Fire

In the time after pestilence we spin fire on the lawn.
The cops roll by
and we all troop inside, dressed as pimps in late
November, a month I used to hate.
The party is good, I don't get any of their numbers
yet, but it's okay, I wasn't around before, even just this August.

It happened in college. You leveled me.

I wouldn't speak anymore, if I did, it would be all I could
speak about. I barely remember the names of everyone
who won't know I ever sat at a table with them. I wish
it hadn't happened that way.
But this party is good.
Someone in a pink mustache-print scarf agrees
that the Apocalypse part of the Bible is terrifying. He is sober now,
too. At the bar I draw an eight-eyed, eleven-winged angel:
don't think I never had these mundanities
of friendship, I just couldn't keep them after you. I think it's worse that way.
In this time after pestilence we all get our third eyes
stuck on by a girl's thumb. They quiver around when we laugh.
I try to remember the names of everyone whose shoulders
I decided not to lean on. I don't yet know the names of everyone
who doesn't know about you.
The cops rolled into your driveway. It was early August.
The lights echoed around me into November,
I cried on the steps. I cried on the steps.

A girl held out my laundry bag for me, trying to help. I wasn't there. I grabbed it away,
washed my hands again and again. I don't remember her name.

You were drunk and I held the bathroom door shut with my foot. The lights
in my dreams never turn off, it all comes
from your room. If I eat
the pomegranate, I will remain in hell. You sit at the edge
of my bed and your jaw falls open.
For eleven years you contaminated
everything—

In the time after pestilence I go to sleep
and dream about you on the edge of my bed and when I wake up
no one is here.
I take my foot off the door and it is morning. I go outside
and we spin fire on the lawn.

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Start Over

You asked me who was walking beside you
and, in July, I did not have an answer

it is August now, they all say you are over

I am biking under apocalyptic sun, hazy and pale
yellow like the violets found only in one place
on one mountain
in one town I'll never go back to

I am wondering if I miss my grandfather
or just that one corner of his yard
past the creek the water cut
from which I could see the high school
where I taught art to teenagers before leaving my mother for good

and she followed me all the way to you
oh the ways I've been left on the floor

I am asking for barriers against grief
and getting none of them

I am in the ocean surrounded by moon jellyfish

I am in the woods again
with a shotgun and shoes not fit for climbing over logs
echoing over flagstones

I am living a life without you, with you
I am shedding skins
I am admitting my love

I am eating again
I am leaving when I can't sleep and never
been happier to drive home

I am spring peepers at night
I am renovated

I am in line at the grocery store
knowing full well I'll be unfurled with the violence
of daylilies in summer

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Ever Since (v.2)

ever since, and I cannot pinpoint
the exact time when it became you
but ever since
I've been dreaming

of accidentally setting my bedroom on fire
and it can't be smothered; it smolders
under the carpet and in the dirt under the windows

I was never an option and I mourn that
you'd never mourn that

I am a body on your couch just like I wanted
but not how I wanted: you lift me away

and smile so sadly, as you do, daybreak eyes
the same way you did in my dream when you said
not for a while

and moved your hands to a different girl
as if you'd announced a death

I find a white moth in a windowsill and keep it in my pocket: a reminder
of what I can never have

with you
magic doesn't exist
I'm not protected from anything

there is no why
there is only is

when you dug your teeth into my spine
when you twined our fingers
gentle
as fuck

and told me to go home

when you calmed me to my core
I believed you