

## Headstones II

From a year is almost is close enough because seventeen is fine when it's sudden, the fragrance as he drives slow as breath and the headstones hover white in the dark when it's late December this certain night, when no one knows where you are.

You climb to the back seat black with beams of moon softly touching the air so lightly so you see the triangle shadows of his nose and the bristled rims of his lashes and the soft thin layer of his lips, the tower of his back as he lowers himself like honey beside you. The air falls sudden sucked the cracks in the doors, you can't breathe as you look, the eyes that keep you.

Everything is listening, in the back seat in the night back out near the quivering trees because here is the first time, everything has been waiting. Everything breathes in.

The lace that gravity takes, the December flowers which your pale fingers feel for and find and tug lightly to the floor. The moon-beamed air you breathe.

He breathes out over you. He lowers himself like fog gathering down the windows.

He breathes out. You could kiss him the way he breathes like that, the way he keeps his bristled eyes as he moves over you, licks and everything swallows and breathes out when you do the way he softly quietly echoes your name.

Seventeen is just fine in the hazy winter night when a year is close and the heat pulses in your sacrum through your teeth and down your legs like blood. He breathes over you like fog and closes his bristled eyes.

You could kiss him and you do, so soft and quietly his eyes closed, the sweet light feather hairs on his neck where it meets his back when you sigh when it's over, here the first time is sealed in the thick black of the dark night in the back behind the headstones that hover whispering and breathing your names.

## **Catatonia**

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It's a thing that haunts me in a thin way, the way my mother when she was young might have felt from one fragile day to the next and how the days felt in her conscious as the hushed minutes snuck by as she did up the stairs to bed at night and as she got older how she might have felt when she woke up in her dusty bedroom that overlooked the lake, the way of her slow sight transitioning from sleep to consciousness in her little white bed and the light from the window to her right glimmering evenly, dusty through the old dry glass. How she knew that her beautiful, shivery mother was just out the door and down at the foot of the stairs in her rocking chair, as vacant as the world was when my young mother ducked her head beneath the lake and sounds and sights vanished, even when she opened up her eyes below the water, no matter how hard she might have squinted, holding air in her tiny lungs, it must have all just looked like empty glints of light.

## Places

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You're walking up your normal stairs, smokey brown and old chipped, and you turn right at the top and into the bathroom, when the light is turned off. You see that it's dark. It's dark but still twilight blue hazy glowing, inhaling, and the curtains look haunting and you wonder what this room is or what it means or feels, even, or if it's anything at all. Like what has happened in it and when someone who used to live here, if they think about it ever when they happen to hear a certain song or something. It's only a bathroom, you might think. Yet you know it's lonely. But right now, you are still there standing, staring, and the sight of the deep room somewhat suddenly makes you wonder what it would feel like if you did not exist, really how would that feel? It makes you look down at your right arm pale wispy long light hairs freckles and certain flesh, veins under running with blood that you can't even feel and bones that don't seem to breathe right there in front of you. It's real, and you wish you knew what that means. You reach your arm up — you don't even have to think — through the air that is always there. You turn on the light.

## **Animals**

### *Response to Humanimal - Rankine*

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vi. xvii. There is a home in New York where my mother, at six, walked in on her own mother slitting her throat. There, eleven years later, she hangs linens on a musty clothesline before the car moves up and stops, and her mother screams and she knows that her sister is dead.

xx. There is a forest in Massachusetts (and one tree in particular; I'm not sure which kind) where my aunt, at twenty, took the rope to tie twice; once around the rugged trunk, once around her throat. She must have jumped quick into the broad awake dark, because a nameless peer walking through the raw trees saw a pale swaying stiffness drooping coldly from the black branch the next day.

o. What sound does a throat make when it purrs to its child? When wind is heaved out by bullet or cable. Does it differ from brute to being? How does it sound when it is being slit by a kitchen knife? By a swift sever to finish off the beast? Does it look different to a crawling girl at six who runs or walks to eat or sleep with milk in her cave or belly or climb a tree, laughing or grunting for pleasure or purpose or none at all. What sound does a throat make when it howls at the moon?

## **Sweat and The Woods**

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You wake in the middle of the night, panting, trembling, nauseous with the depth of it, your fingers come up wet, your body is throbbing, you lie awake for hours on your back, your eyes glazing, your mouth gaping, biting at your sheets with the hunger of it, as thoughts of sweat and the woods stunt you into heightened stillness and the excruciating waves of seconds lap at your fevered, sopping skin.

## **Dispossession**

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Sometimes,

I catch a glimpse of it

shadowed in a wrinkle of my mother's aging face

And sometimes I smell it,

in solidifying moonlight of sugary grass and cool soft air

And sometimes I feel it, crawling lightly up my leg while I am waiting

And I hear it, sometimes, too - a sweet distant music of vanishing wind

And it tastes like the sinking sun.

But when I try to hold it,

it only laughs as it blows, twirling past my somber face

and through my pale, casting fingers

then whispering,

*"Maybe tomorrow"*-

## **My Father's House**

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His laugh is so sweet, it reminds me of things small and noiseless, he is such a quiet thing. He stays in and reads a lot, he lives in his silent mind. When he laughs, it's just for me and my sister and brother and mom, he saves these small things for us, when he laughs a tiny window in the world that he keeps to himself opens slightly and a fragile thing floats out.

Mom cries all the time, when she prays, when she laughs, when she talks about how much she loves us. All of her windows are open all of the time. All of her doors are unlocked.

I've never seen him cry, not once, but I've heard him laugh, a sweet thing, a tiny crack in the window.