

Through this Vector

Nathalie

In this dream with you

I saw my old self

Old flaws and quirks surfaced

and swallowed

the space in my room

in a bloom of lucent shame

and regret

Between a crippling admittance

and a jaundiced nothing

I chose to see just you

Castles in the Sky

I remember your voice
sisterly, reproachful, commanding
how you always led us to trouble

bathing in dirty water
in your new unfinished swimming pool
the ensuing itches

These puddles of memory
reflect a moon
behind us

You had tried
to teach me how to swim
and we both almost drowned

I see us playing hide and seek
your glow-in-the dark stars
lighting your room

and summers of horror films
and comedies unravel
like a roll of film

that falls
on your trampoline

and through the light

I see you picking hibiscus
and almonds at grandma's
stealing deserts and sneaking wine

What happened
to us cousin? You that taught me
of taste and malice

are no longer the preacher
of how salt
makes a world of a difference

on green tomatoes
It's like we can't catch up
like we've spread too thin

Where is that malice
that had once held
your eyes?

Do these creases
now droop feebly
from motherhood?

Our distance tells
the story of how Barbie and Ken

grew aware of the fragility of limbs

of genitals and plastic houses.

Old faces

I hold back memories

in hopes of a timing

to relish or condemn them

alone or with someone

In a party by candlelight

there is prettiness, politeness

sincerity, sarcasm

and always hypocrisy

What does a small moon

seen through beer goggles

say? Goggles that add color

like cellphone filters

and drench worry

Pleasantries will precede

the eventual awkward pause

when neither of us will know

who the other is, but will pretend to

And then

a glimpse of your face

at an angle

that shows me the shape
of your eye
what it might be looking at
I thank god for wonder.

Dogs

The past
a thing you go to
when your head can't empty
Even failure is better than nothing
My dogs come to mind: Jack and Huey
A wake up call
of dog breath on my face
and a shuffling of paws hitting tile
Huey's curious steps
then Jack's thump
their claws scratching on furs
and collars rattling
before I picked up their leashes
riddled in dog hair
Ready to go meant
happily wagging tails
On our long morning walks
I learned that

to know a scent
you have to burry your face in grass
and know that there is nothing better
I picture Jack chasing after that frizbee
with dog gusto
and Huey the yorky, smaller but older
trying to keep up this wild enthusiasm
he had transmitted to his younger sibling
Doggy see, doggy do
Jack brought back the frizbee
more often than not
for that cursed hole in the enclave
he'd spot before his escape to freedom
all to my trailing misery
I learned that doggy breath is enthusiasm
and that the sound of dog food
falling in a bowl
is an enticing song
Huey's boundless curiosity to stick
his nose where it didn't belong
and to love it
gave us adventures
and Jack
the friendly, eager pittbull
became like his brother
though his better manners
never rubbed on Huey
I hope their new owners gave them

that yard I could never own
I hope that they're alive and well
a deepest desire of mine
that somewhere in that yard
they look up after smelling that grass
and believe it's me behind them
Their greetings at the door
were more reliable than god.

Genotype

Every time we fight
You and I
are Abel and Cain
When I put dagger in facing you
my anger
restricted your eyes

Insides are black jars
once opened, that find no lids
I see the three of us in the mirror
mom a template
for every other woman I'll meet
and want to take to bed
dad, what my vanity challenges
you and I, opposites

that look similar

Had I been you

and you, me...

Your sin: never seeing

the ensuing wound

of my trajectory

Mine: unyielding

and reasserting vanity

that clings to roots

as thick as hatred

That I see in you

fantasies I have learned

to dismiss angers me

as if dad were speaking

through me, your hammer

not yet Thor's, not yet rebuilt

from cracked wood

into steel

It's because you worry me

that I apologize.