

*i see god*

At the end of summer,  
turmeric turns into mustard stains snailing down your shirt,  
tangerine peels are composted into pumpkin seeds, and  
strawberry jam tastes like merlot in our mouths.

I see god  
in the stone path behind my grandfather's workshop,  
in the handprints made with brown paint on dinner plates,  
in the grass stains of your new shoes.

At the end of summer  
I have hope,  
that you savor my name just before it leaves  
your mouth, that we both fight sleep to stay on the line—  
that the present is mine to keep.

The catholic church is open twenty-four hours  
but so is the diner  
and so is your door.  
You know which one I choose every time.

At the end of autumn,  
I am holding on  
to smoke and the bruise-colored bags  
under my eyes. food is rotting in the fridge  
while the laundry spins, and I feel nauseous—  
dizzy with apology.

But I still see god  
in the nutmeg trails along the countertop,  
in the crunching of the leaves when I kick them  
and the clouds rolling by,  
folding over themselves—  
in the way I throw salt over my shoulder.

I see god  
in the moonlight passing through the stained glass windows,  
in the chocolate shake and sweet potato fries  
just for me—  
in the way I don't go there anymore.

*vignettes of the house i grew up in*

the bathroom bleeds beige from showers scalding.  
beads drip down  
like a fever even this house cannot sweat out.  
i write my name in the steam of the mirror  
then, lightheaded, lie down to count the tiles.

toothpaste stains in the sink & tufts of hair unswept,  
i reach for a towel in the dark.  
everything has its place  
so nothing ever changes.

i have come to believe this is mine.

in winter, cracks form between adjacent walls.  
i braid the afghan's fringe & listen to the ticking clock.  
a garland of paper dolls festoons the mantel—  
fire blazing below, i pray  
the girls do not let go of one another's hands.

books sit on the coffee table, unread pages yellowing  
while hellebores wither in a vase of stagnant water.  
a barking dog then breaks the silence  
and i scream into the couch cushions.

the soundtrack of a life i wish to leave.

the white walls of my bedroom are covered with  
dried flowers & dead butterflies.  
i tape up bags of tea i will never drink,  
stolen photos of children i will never meet,  
sepia maps of places i will never go.

for i am trapped under the pin-prick—  
the same patch of blue & white sky  
whose clouds barrel towards me  
then leave me far behind

still tapping on the glass of the bell jar.

## *the superstitions*

When I turn fifteen, I will dye my hair red—  
an almost burnt orange—  
because I miss the Superstition Mountains.  
The Southeast is too green, too humid, caked in mud.  
As kudzu wraps around my throat, I am left  
gasping for air,  
buried until the light can no longer touch me.  
    We are both displaced, invasive—  
    imposters in a foreign landscape.

When I turn eighteen,  
I will be haunted by red rocks and volcanic ash.  
The memories of Home will prick like cactus needle, and  
the world I left behind will melt in the sweltering heat.  
So I will light myself on fire,  
run a hairbrush through the hot flames.  
    Standing on this ledge, I feel reborn somehow—  
    a Phoenix dusting embers off their wings before they fly.

    But I am only thirteen.  
    I don't know any of this yet.

For now, I am loitering in the supermarket parking lot.  
My mouth stained blue from Italian ice,  
my hair still the color of sand dune,  
and I am staring up at the Superstitions  
uncontrollably weeping—  
partly because someone crashed a plane up there.  
Against the night sky, the whole valley can  
see the fire— can imagine their bodies burning.  
    But I also cry for reasons I cannot name or place.  
    how prescient and fleeting this all feels.