

When We Were Mud

Our nothingness was everything
when we were mud, still,
stirred, we stood
to be counted and forgot
our filth, the dirt beneath
the crescents of our fingernails. Maybe
we departed before the mud dried, maybe
we arrived before we were formed,
maybe we didn't remember
we were dirty.
We rose and forgot
that standing is just the start
of the need to lie down, to tie our eyes
with sutures of sleep eventually,
inevitably
a furrow begins in the first petal
the perfect cup of a tulip collapses
the wheel of each flower spins into dust
every leaf trades green for fire every stone
softens for the river every beat
of your heart is a pump closer to falling
back into the earth.

When my mud dries, open the heavens
to let the rain fall into pearls
on this skin I wear
wash the dust back to my feet
let my petals curl
out of the way, for the next
blossom might mean more, the next
leaf will rust into glorious tatters, the last
beat hammers into stillness
and we remember everything,
everything is borrowed.

Blackbird

Blackbird bobs on his branch
At first, I think his dance is the wind
but then I see it is his own weight
too great for the slender stem
clutched in the circle of his toes.

He peers with intense button eye, just one
as though he has found what he came to visit—me—
behind his bright shouts beneath
his dark mutterings I hear
the things he doesn't say, the things
he can't wrap with sound.
I don't know the words either
but in the crimson thrust of his epaulets
as he bristles his throat I sense the urgency I hear
the boulder of his thoughts the fear
night will come with some pearl unsaid
some idea too big for his song some sigh
that can't be heaved because its weight
would break us would make us
fall from our tree.

With one flap he fades into nothing
as the bottle of night spills to cover all color
his harbinger ebony gone into the matte ink.
This darkness, known, is a kindness
maybe
the other is, too.

The Afterlives of Leaves

*(Komorebi: tree leaking through sun
the miracle of light, leaves)*

Cellulose bones strung
like ribs parched in the sun
woody webs spread over their own decay
roadmaps pointing to their end.
Do they remember seizing the light
as it fell, driving cupped hands upward
in worship?

When you get there
will you know if you are broken
into fractals of yourself or
just broke down with your back to the light?
Will you remember the last time
laughter fell from your lips as you sipped
time from the silty swirl
at the bottom of your cup?

Look up at the heavens where
it all starts over where
we strung our words on the spokes
of the stars for later, always later.
They flutter and rustle where we sift for order
where we cling to each other hoping to
hold the light before it passes.

Web

Untethered

tiny spider mariners

set sail into the unknown dusk

their entire lives

strung between trunks

that must seem like planets stationary

unmoving as the wind sways them

from one galaxy to the next

and they never know.

Beneath

our feet seethes

the coronary flow of this earth

the whole reason

we stand in the first place

but the rock we cling to, sink our anchors

seeking warmth is forever reforming

pushing us away from its churn

and we never know.

Buried

in our hearts

sits a seed placed there

before we came

out of the darkness

sliding into the arms of our family trees

the fertile carbon fingers that start

the heart seed's tendrils drawing

our map back home.

Flight

Is there wonder is there light
when time has fled when
the heart trembles its last when
your hand is not there inside your hand
 this was always meant to happen

Do you stand balanced between mountains
or are you wrapped inside a cloud or
do you drink the river whole as
you swim like a salmon to completion
 this is the natural order

What sky do you feather with raindrop wing
can you still see the shimmy of a lily stem can you
feel the last paint of sunset brush your skin do you
hear the hawk scree as it streams toward the earth
 you need to get over this

Will you remember a black so black
it reflects green a song so sweet
you can't possibly think when some tiny miracle
makes you catch your breath
are you still
still