

In the Air

Not the pent-up buds, not the humming-
birds, cut from rainbow, caroming home,

nor the fizzy-sloppy delight of being pumped
up on phytoncides from forests

so hyper-oxygenated that even you can breathe
easy. Not the veins of snowmelt that pool

around your boots, sousing them in mud,
recalling bygone childhood joy. Nor even

the genre of delight that bird chitchat
and song afford. No, in this season of thaw and make-

do nurseries, take peace in believing
that this sudden multiplication of life can exist

with and alongside genocide
for only so long. Capitalism's landscape of anxiety

too must die, and the plunder from above
of those below. Think boiling points, think uprisings

and the Arab Springs, think oustings and Minneapolis
police violence that cannot be condoned
any longer. Take heart that these triggers

may be like the "impending storm" in Haiti in 1791
or like "the ancient call for bread" and roses

in a Massachusetts factory in 1912. Now the grass,
tomorrow the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf.

Now your pent-up grief,
tomorrow that first prickle of outrage

in your velvet soul that will spring
forth unbidden, the first revolt.

Note: Several of these lines are drawn from other sources, including William Carlos Williams' "Spring and All;" Robert Frost's "Spring Pools"; Guillaume Raynal's words which predicted the Haitian slave revolt, referring to the early signs of revolt as an "impending storm;" and James Oppenheim's poem "Bread and Roses."

Firestarter

Mother, if I were you, I'd have known
how to jumpstart your heart
and seed miracles in your hair,

how to revivify the beautiful wreck of you.
But in the end, hypotheticals are just the future's
promised curses. Same goes for the mothers-

in-waiting that never existed, the tether
of catastrophe that failed to tie me
to family. Grief beaked me in the eyes,

but there are days I see your face
in a bighearted peony or in the new igniter
inside of me, sticky with over-handling.

They say the astronauts in the International Space
Station see several orbital sunrises a day. I'm training
my mind to see the verb of you in your absence:

the gale of the hawk swooping below;
the craze of the mouse's music box-heart;
the grace of your making when you help me avert

small crises. Mother, I miss you still.
Do I become like the soft glow
in Sargent's painting of the Chinese paper lanterns

lit by girls englobed in lilies, carnations, rose?
Do I choke down this fire on my tongue
so I don't catch it on the striker of the world?

The Crackup

-For Elise

Grief makes for loneliness
in everyone's presence save yours.
Save yours, Lifeboat, who shows
off the riddle of your buoyancy
when the bilge fills. When you stop
the spool of my brain from grounding
down to a nub. When I try to enter
the day's present tense and bang around
against the edges of *I should haves*,
you moondance me back home
to where the birds are not afraid to land.

You: my cradle in emergency.
My here and now. My crocus' purple lips
in an ice storm. Listen: the snow
is a secret-keeper and so are you,
and when I won't give up my dead
for dead and see signs perching in the trees,
you indulge me. I admit I'm a double dipper
in all things: books, for example, and visions.
Grief hallucinations, the doctor calls them.
But you hold me and call me sane,
feeding the ghosts that sustain me,
looking them straight in the eye.
Maybe dying's not a kind of distance after all.

Anyway, we're all just cracks in time,
like the mountains, like the ferns peeking through
pitted rocks, like the Indian pipes and birches,
the chickadees who seem, for a moment,
to ward off disaster with their sweet *chick-a-
dee-dee-dee*. They're not calling their own
names, but yours, just like we're all crying
out for each other. My mother knew this,
and now I teach you. My mother is the earth
now and the spring streambed, and you are my sun,
and maybe dying, in the end,
is not all it's cracked up to be.

Hideout

Where to go when the earth's no cover,
wonder the creatures who cannot match
their fur to season, who can no longer hide
their white hides or feathers in snow cover.

With what language do we grieve a mismatched
body? Once upon a time, the willow grouse rhymed
with snowscape and birch-fretted forest, but what cover
can she fly to now? And the snowshoe hares? Stand-

still bulls-eyes to raptors who pinpoint their off-rhyme
bodies in the overwarmed understory. Out of sync
too are the weasels whose winter bodies stand
in wait too long for the first snowfall, whose bodies

once welcomed snow as a consolation of color. Sync
your clocks to the music of a shattering globe, friends;
this mutiny of climate is ours, too. Remember in your bodies
how it felt the first time a friend spilled all your secrets.

another note on the body

-a golden shovel after danez smith

in the part of your body

that still replies to the call of sky, that wings

out past the locked ward of your mind & the shotgun-

persuasions of your country, you, bird,

flee the scene again to be a hero

in this age means to be at war with yourself

rather than the world, but don't fret so much

of your sadness and fire

can be renamed revolt this is not your final scene,

& you are not fit to be tied just yet the end

may not be the end after all, & you live

you live still the ghosts inside you are dead

only in flesh & are clambering out of your mouth, miracles.