

The House is Burning

Who am I, if not without
doubt in what is to come?
Burnt not-wood stinks of spring.
Gardenias in the wax lit
like Hannukah. The wicks
are afraid of ash.

Every night
my mind plays a game. It tries
to one-up its previous script.
My nightmares all involve tiny
creatures. The first time, cats
were brawling in a cul-de-sac.
I step in, get jumped, awaken
afraid. Another, while driving
upslope with windows cracked,
birds dove through the opening
like kamikaze pilots. We crash
through the railing. Metal, glass
and a paint slurry decorate
the cliffside. The last dream,
a spider slid from the ceiling
like a prize grabber, lifting me
up by my temples. The dreams
are affecting me. Once, in Utah
on an island eclipsed by serrated
peaks and melting snow, I climbed
a hill to admire the crystal waters.
An army of gnats, big as horseflies,
greeted me at the top. They chased
me for at least 10 minutes downhill
as I jogged back to my car. A few
dozen snuck in through the driver
side door to block my retreat.

Cracks in the foundation

I watch a sliver of galaxy drift lower. Fire balls brighter than the Sun hotter too
are within my grasp, but the rift is too narrow to jump through. Cosmic Lion split space
but only offered a three second window to decide. He left the laws of time unchanged.
Which is to say, I left Aslan on the altar of his sacrifice. I was not around when the stone
ruptured. I did not participate in his re-emergence. I was long gone before his roar
penetrated castle gates and endless snow. Which is to say passing out in the pews
was never my thing. If I fell, the spirit would not catch me. Carpet burn might.
My place is in back clapping loud enough to drown out mumbled refrains.

Selected images from childhood

IV. The Green Knight

A home is a warehouse for guillotines.
I know this intimately. When I was three,
a falling photo snatched part of my pinky.
In exchange, it granted me my first memory.
There are blades all around for tongues
to summon. Children are alchemists.
Laughter is created from destruction.
It is a simple game. Whatever blow is delivered
will be returned in kind. I learned to be
without ego. For the gift of payback.
This is all there is.

VI. First cuss word

There is acid	all around for tongues
to summon. Hush	words uncovered
on swing sets.	The air on trips home
stings with remorse.	Eyes down.
Lids tread water.	Open barely enough
to admire the street	lights pirouetting
in the dark.	They spin and twirl
then toss each other	into the night.
If only I could	just forget myself.

Burning my old shit

Much can be learned from beheading
a great oak. Trace the density of its spine
uncover clues to its past. When daddy
and momma threw caution to the wind. The first
frost that stripped it naked. All the summers without.
Much can be learned from crying to the heavens
for Earth to be rent. An opera cake is revealed.
Each layer tells a story.
And for each story, a secret.

But liberation is unlearning.
As simple as spark and breath.
Imagine the ecstasy when Alexandria's
library was lit. The atmosphere
animated by the 808s of giddy hearts
urging the twerking flames to commit.
When the rhythm of rebellion takes root,
flat feet get left on the sidelines
and what was is lost in smoke.