

The Lakehouse

One night my brother explains the stars,
The uncertain pull of swiveling galaxies,
And I do not feel small or specious
But illustrious, knowing it could be my role
Someday to receive and relay their stories,
Unlikely as that may be; off the porch
Binoculars tell me that love still exists
As two people make out on a paddleboard,
And Shirley spins the sparkling tube
As I stand amazed my sibling and father
Can both withstand the atmospheric pressure
Of sitting alone with the sun in their eyes
Telling silences to one another (their lips move)
As I pass you things that should have a different name
For going in and coming out; a pine not a pine
Anymore once pressed to paper, strewn
With symbols, which could be any tangible
Or intangible thing, an amalgamation
Of cartoon heads blowing with smoke,
A metamorphosis of a god to a common
Water bird, the dereliction of duty
Of a sleepy sentry, perhaps the correlation
Of breaking a baseball window
With an easy one like a spider caught
In its own web (the assayed hope
That I simply float as we all float
Through these countless fumigations).

My sister wants to be a farmer.
But how to count one's combustible moments
While also ascertaining with an asterisk
Whether the field of manipulative society
Approves, nods the head for filling minds
With trivia and wayward collectibles,
A stance not so much readying for battle
With pointed stick in hand as lost
Before the organization of predictable goods,
And the sovereign subject is a willingness
To pose the soliloquy of softened echoes
Sprawling out, a sort of ghostly
Country store clerk told your address
Then immediately regrets as said
Dude could be a serial killer;
And thus we must lock the doors,
Leave someone on watch, the wakes
Interpolating the docks, a singsong
Method of collecting data,
The accumulation of lyrical acumen
A wooden cane leaned upon for support
While the interstellar magnates
Feel sorry they didn't up the price,
Really rip people off, as the fangs grip.

Waves

I can't find anything new to say about the waves.
Are they like that driver crying and screaming
on the highway, passing us though no one could hear
a word, someone saying he should pull over?
Are they like stumbling through the dark,
feeling air like a zombie, banging your toe
on some unseeable? Are they like a precious
stone you try and fail to skip across the waters?
No, they are like a part of me has melted
and that liquid has fused with the earth.
I mean there's not much difference between
a self and a wave; they're made of the same
stuff and both constantly shift, unable to settle.
Nothing makes me think of nothing like a wave.
In that way they're kind of like muted snow on TV,
a NASCAR race, or old-timey pastoral poetry.
The wave has dark hair, a broiling dress
that scatters white sequins all over the place,
and I try to talk to her but she never listens,
or else hears and then forgets like a dementia patient.
The wave never does what we tell her to,
which is part of the reason I love her too.
To my knowledge, no one has ever understood
her crash, the stillness resumed, sand exhumed.
I've never left her at my doorstep, ringing the bell.
I've never intentionally missed her call,
let it go to voicemail. I've never kissed her feet
though on many occasions she's deigned to kiss mine.

I've never tried to assign a name to a wave,
because above all a wave defies being labeled, confined.

I try to walk, ever so slowly, lumbering really,
into the waves, but I'm afraid I'll never stop,
that I'll just keep going till the top of my head
turns invisible, turn indivisible from the sea,
though if I'm honest that'd be okay with me.

Personality Test

Do you suffer from sleeplessness?

Are the stars' bellies full of lead?

Would you be happy as a carpenter?

Are there tattoos we should know about?

Do you daily release a piercing ode?

What size's your underwear?

Are you officially adulting?

Have you ever committed adultery?

If your life was a movie,

what would it be rated?

How often does Cerberus berate you?

Have you felt you failed as a poet?

Do you prefer the beige or the blue dress?

Do you gnaw upon the narwhal tooth?

Do you put your hands in the air

like you really do care?

How often do you wash behind your ears?

How often do you withhold the tears?

How often do you Brittany Spears,

grab the sheers and go nuts?

What's life's most ignominious but?

Have you ever shamed yourself a slut?

Have you ever created something

you're afraid to let see light of day?

Do you ever long to stay

along the quay, forever awaiting
the arrival of auspicious sea-spray?
Do you prefer dogs or cats, at that?
Do you believe it when someone
tells you, "Everything will be okay?"
How long can you hold your breath
underwater? Doesn't this ink blot
look like Death riding a unicorn?
What sort of porn do you look at?
Is your heart worn, torn apart
by the people who claim to love you?
In the summer grass, do you prefer
to go with or without shoes?
Has a foreign spirit ever inhabited
you, clapped and asked for snacks?
Have you ever tried to forget
yourself by breathing sunshine?
Have you ever tried to forget
yourself by seething moonshine?
Have you ever tried to forget yourself?

Raw Deal

I just front flipped off a thirty-foot bridge.

Nah, that was me ten years ago.

Twenty years ago I was running naked
through the streets of my small town.

Thirty years ago I was planting my painted
hand unconsciously on a poster board
signing my name I knew not why.

Before that I was just a chrysalis
with a single pack of matches
mumbling to myself *Being and Nothingness*

plotting my next move like this cloud
cover rushing forth then retreating
before the whistle blew, the gun shot.

Interpreting the small talk of nihilists
and narcissists became a hobby
though I lobbied multiple times
to be paid tiny golden ducklings
a plethora of miniature models
which I imagined might give me insight
into why these seasons weave
so seamlessly into one, whichever sun
currently backhands your forehead.

I soon forgot my forefathers or anyone
with two first names, so try to please
remember these artifacts for later study,

perhaps a dissertation on the desolation
of certain nocturnal birds, or a monument
for whoever invented the term *Duh*.

I only began to understand the lay
of the land later, when the locals blindfolded
me and drove me way out into the desert,
I thought to conduct something sinister
but actually only to show me a flowering cactus,
its location their most tightly guarded secret.

Of America's Dreams

The connective tissue of colloquial America begins
with a sigh and ends, predictably, with a scythe.
To think one could hang one's life on a thumbtack
seems strange, yet singularities abound, bound
by the same laws that irk everyone, inescapable
definition, the sun's ceaseless tightrope transgressions,
the infallible transience of unanimous laughter.
See my insides rise and speak to me like a tiny pocket
of felonious air rising from a deep, growing well.

It's not so much the mouth's a mockery
of mirrors past, loitering no place like a mirage,
but the fact that after so many miles and so much sand
its motor hasn't turned to ash. A landscape abandoned,
we call for a sign and the stars fall out. If only their white
noise would go away, seek another somnolence to prolong,
the rhythm of buzz-saws and ribbons might free us
of impossible gospel. Then we could break apart,
reassemble without directions—a thought lost
matchbox from a memorable hotel room.