

New Earth

A gritty sidewalk is most freckled with gum
when winter lingers in Afterthought. The tulips peek around
the corner to get a better look at me, like candies suspended on green pipe
cleaners... the vermilion petals as thin as an eyelid, a moth's wing,
the same as they've been for centuries and centuries
the feeling is simply fundamental, in a way, we can always rely on the blossoms.
It should be Spring, but the air is too crisp
on edge, maybe feeling a little scatter brained – after all, this city tends to
fritter your mind in hot oil. Today I smell the curry powders
the man peddles on the street in translucent tubs, the woman peeling her luscious
mangoes, sprinkling them with fiery red fairy dust,
and all the fanfare of a city street: milk and spindles, drawing you in
while in sharp relief, horns blare. The tulips
follow me down the gray like beauty smelling out sorrow
from the year of Death, the year that we lost lightness,
the embrace from strangers, seeing full faces, breathing in deeply, the waves
of the air... of everything being something other than what you were told.
The tulips follow me today, just as they follow the turning of the earth
and the sun chasing its tail, it's the principle of tomorrow
they're living for. And tomorrow, when I wake,
the tulips will grow from the stresses where the sidewalk bursts
apart, they will bloom through the store fronts and in the mouths of the
people who cannot love, they will climb, petal by petal, onto the rooftops
and into the middle of the road – traffic will stop, tulips growing
and growing until the city block turns into a glass bowl
filled with rainbowed jelly beans –
sweet and melancholy and new, once more.

Tomorrow's Love Poem

Today I am rehearsing for a history
that I don't quite know yet/ you are cooking for the two of us
your knife at work with its silver appreciation/ just like your green-brown eyes when
you go fishing inside my brain/ hook hurled deep within a kaleidoscope bearing
a rounded future/ and I feel like molting the heavy coats of my skin/ they've
crusted over and over until I couldn't fight against their power any longer/ Then
I imagine in some future year/ our kitchen is a basin for liquid sun/ and it's not
the expanse/ not the glinting burnished gadgets that catch my desire/ but more of
the warm contentedness that I devour/ standing at the cavernous sink with juices
dribbling from my jaw/ it's the bananas hanging like tropical chandeliers and
the beautiful murmuring that swims through our home/ it's the thought that the past is
sometimes a circle that learns to unpeel from its own back/ and that
our love is the sort of token I hungered to see in my girlhood. These days,
I smile when I hear you talking about me on the telephone/ I don't know
where we began to lay down limestone or when a bridge turns into
ark/ but pull me close to your center/ may our skins weather a million
days and shrivel up like a jeweled mango left too long in a wire basket/ when
my hair sprouts gray and wispy/ take your arthritic hands and cradle mine
forever/ promise me when our bones and sinew succumb to the earth that
gave us everything/ we will turn into some sort of fairy dust and dance
forever in the air somewhere
far,

far,

far

away.

Reprise: A Confession

Amir, I bet you don't even remember this, but
I do. That day you told me you were a Muslim. We
were in the fourth grade and (forgive me) I was young
I didn't know how to decipher the mass of your words quite
like I do now. I gashed the air around you with my tongue –
I delivered my disgust.
Light drained from your cheeks and the damage I had left
blotched in your skin.
(Suffice it to say) I am sorry now, as I was sorry then,
only seconds later, I immediately wished
I could take it all back, stuff a foam mattress once more into its
vacuum-sealed plastic casing, fish the sun from the Rubicon
and pull it back to sheltered earth.
(Of course, I could not do this).

Amir, I too, am a pawn in a poisoned America. I drink
from the groundwater where the hatred runs off to,
it swells under our homes and our gardens,
in our capillaries, in our swallowing throats.
Then it slinks out from the bottoms of our voices and back
into the air. So, I drink
the morality of the 24-hour news cycle
rolling on a whining hamster wheel, it
blares from the TV, the radio, I look up to what the
men in pressed suits are telling me, to what my parents tell me
in hushed tones while sipping green tea,
I take what is dispatched to me, and
I dispatch that back to you... though sometimes,
(I tell myself) sometimes, I think twice.

Amir, I don't know if you even think of me or that day,
here I am trying to answer to you, answer to me:
outlier or harbinger? I'm sorry. By the way,
I'm not like that now,
I'm not like that now.

Snooze Cycle

Would you like to be two souls
Floating in a pocket of time?

I love to love how the world adores you,
But sometimes I love to love you
In this most isolating way:

When the air feels velvet,
And our tangled limbs become
The arthritic roots of age-old oak.

And beginnings loom as imminent as the closing chapter,

Every breath a dying
Tick,
Tick,
Tick,
Towards the end.

Or possibly, another start.

Diner Smitten

To love a diner is to crave
dingy carpeting and sunny waitresses, the perfume of
coffee and butter tucked away, murmuring in the kitchen.
I remember devouring French toast and
marmalade, sipping orange juice speckled with its own flesh.
We'd made a habit of sneaking out, in those days...
I'd hop into your car –
always, on an unsuspecting Tuesday or Thursday afternoon –
lunch was a luxury we could barely afford,
of course I knew you were smitten with me, then.
It was as obvious as the way honeyed syrup
stuck to everything in that little café: the sides of the vinyl booths,
the translucent menus reading like encyclopedias,
trapping our fingers, our elbows
to the tacky table. I recall we sat there a little too long,
the reminder of my skin pulling away from fossilized amber
sticking tenderly in my palms.