

today and every day

I drink poison every morning, a quick shot
of mouthwash, and let it burn my tongue,
throat, stomach
like a grand, whipping fire.

I started
doing this when I was 13,
because I had already began
decaying.

My throat has been rubbed raw,
open sores that ignite whenever air touches them. So
I keep my mouth shut, that way the pain stays dull
and tolerable.

I live inside my body
like it is a home
that no other person could possibly come near,
that crumbling structure, rotted wood with acidic stains.

My face speaks with an intensity
I have yet to understand. Jaw clenched unknowingly,
I can see their hands stutter and stop
not to come near a rabid dog about to snap.

They are not wrong. Sometimes,
it feels as though a romping and reckless
beast (of what sort?)
lives in my brain gnawing at my sanity like a rubber bone.

I could never study the ocean the way I did you(r body).

For much of my life, I have stood on the edge of this coast, yawning, taking in mouthfuls of salty water and crisp air that belonged in a bottle of Febreze. Many memories lie beneath those rocks, hidden barnacles look like scabs that tear at my mind.

I remember her smile the most.

When we had gone to the convenience store on the corner of 8th and Illinois St and bought two slushies, three Snickers bars, a bag of cheddar popcorn, a hot dog (which we fed to the stray who lived in the alley) and a large can of pizza flavored Pringles.

In our arms was that disgusting concoction of chemicals, but it made her smile.

The water of the ocean doesn't look nearly as blue after having seen her eyes so many times. Small fish swim around my toes, kissing my skin, and I am ashamed of the blush on my cheeks. I stay facing the water, not to glance at that spot in the sand where we were once bare and whole as one strange beast.

Her hair was soft even with bits of sand.

I wonder: if I stand here long enough, as this globe turns and turns, will the moon be able to lift the tide high enough that it could consume me? Its watery jaw crashing down on my skull and washing me into the rest of its body like a piece of driftwood.

I jolt when a large whitecap slaps against my knee.

Come, let me tell you about beauty

I am wrapped
 in this fat cocoon,
thick walls
of fleshy plaster and caulk.

I made this prison all on my own (or did I?)

Really, it is still a home where trash bags have sat

in the corner for days
weeks
years now,

but I continue
to fill the garbage can with more shit.

And yet, what would a home
be
if it didn't invite disgust
 into my mouth,
like burnt popcorn curdling my taste buds.

A shell of skin
 as pale as dollar-store oatmeal and, certainly,

I have been restless, so

it is not without scars (where do they keep coming from?)

Scars deep and pink,
 like the sunset,

but less breathtaking and more disappointing
like finding a deep crack
 in the wall of your new apartment.

Girls and boys alike

have
gathered to see,

riding the bus makes me feel like a spectacle,

something so obscene and hideous,

you can't help but stare,
 mouth agape with soundless worship.

 Truly,
I am nothing
 but a poisonous afterthought, lethal

as a lungful of oxygen.