

“The House II”

The compost pile burned for nineteen years

the daughter’s absence
buried under decades
of children’s magazines
and apple green alcohol

first-born
on a calendar written, really
second-born

she gardens her mistakes
as poppies

lets weeds grow

I was raised quietly violent
because at that house violence lives:
three dead frogs in the back yard

“Revisitations”

1

you were wrong about me in the way
that you were wrong about how often it rains

drunkenly telling me the Jews
didn't kill Jesus but it was the Buddha you called on that night, and the police
to make me stay

in dreams I wake up in that room and break your glasses

fascinated by windows, still, like the one glowing
darkly on my feet
keeping the bathroom door shut

there are some things I miss
making dry popcorn in dusty bowls
the smell of nail polish
cat hair in my eyes

2

I ordered the duck sausage in Concord with you
on a good day to pretend we knew each other

in March we tapped the maples
and I burned one pan of it so badly I threw it in the snow
but you weren't there for that

or when I cooked only spaghetti and frozen filets for days
or the lightbulbs burning out, one by one

“The Disruption II”

They are dredging the pond

the new brown landscape only
half a shock, not frightening
dug-up leaves crumpled around each other
in dirt, body sized

this is something I've seen or only
half seen
tried to talk to as if what happened didn't matter
to us: the leaves and me

we've entered November heavily
with the strength I needed to be
here

listen: I need to tell you something about sitting at that table
with stringy hair after a shower, shoving pills
down a cat's throat
rotting alive, because we cannot talk to each other
as if I've never been unrecognizable

they are dredging the pond

the trees there are silent, they know
sometimes ponds need to be dredged
the edges of the water have iced and the same geese as last year leave again
to come back in April

“Teratoma”

1

Your face a mess
of tubes
a scrappy beard
suddenly you were a desert prophet
the way your eyes grew
or your face shrunk around them

in the white room an attendant in red set your bed up wrong
I almost told the doctor about him
and caught a cold from the sheets they shook out

for twelve hours your parents sent me updates
afterward I watched them remind you to clear your lungs

I drove you to Best Buy
folded all your shirts
later I would take back the blanket
but I held your hand during the shots

2

I told my sister in the car how I thought I knew what love was
this time
like June
or food coloring into water
vastness ahead of me

but I'd been growing my own secret mass of someone else's teeth and hair
long before you
my face a mess
until you couldn't love me anymore

that feeling walking upstairs and
my grasp on life was like when an old cat's bones turn to bird bones

the way you slept
unsettled

your lips on my ear
were vines

“Spring Street”

1

During quietness I garden because I have to

winter’s lavender and verbena corpses exhumed
from the ground today
you surprise me

you water me

I spent the day in wait
so instead cut sage until my fingers bled

if there’s a way to paw the leaves away in front of me
sometimes I think I don’t want to do it another day

without you
can this settle into a planter box like rain

I wake up covered in flies

2

I found a white moth for my hair
a bathroom sink found redemption in my presence today
but you

how far will I go?

I don’t know what happened to break you of me

I want to tell you about my father’s columbines
how no one says “golly” like they did in the 50s

I clean a different house every day
at each one I think of you
I want to poke into closets with you
show you glass doorknobs and how we could walk through
and make a room better

in this room full of pennies I’m hungry
but I miss you like water