

Codependency

Bed frames and cabinets flicker, crushing
wood to stucco, plucking
rusted year-old necklaces which once
trailed gangrene circles along my
collar bones.

Cigarette ash rains on our truck's backseat
like remnants of the people we
were.

Then, tumble bits of his hair and teeth,
pulling a melody like clattering cutlery and
static.

I should sweep them away with
leftover
microwave meals and shared wine bottles.
Instead, I jar them, mix the tissue into
morning coffee, and sip it,

splayed on empty sun-smear'd sheets. It tastes
of his quiet hummed words,
belonging to no one,
the bitter rot of grapes, and
vinegar tongue-wrapped kisses.

The wallpaper
withers
like festering lilies

and layers the carpet in dusted sleet but
his cologne, his sweat has
left
my sweaters and raincoats; only the scent
of drowned cotton and polyester remains,
so I freeze, watching
my skin decay to soft yellow
mush and my hair break in matted clods.

I trudge to our room again to scrounge for more
pieces.

An abandoned t-shirt or half drunk tea cup.

I rattle the desk drawers,
dust the book shelves with my
fingertips.

But, I find I have drained all of him
and all of me.

The Apocalypse in Stages or Your First Kiss

I. Terra Firma

The end begins with disintegration of the foundation. The ground, unnoticed until destroyed, crumbling like dried wedding cake. Grass and yellow desert shrubs peeled apart by warm sands and footprints, stripping the earth bare. Then, there's only dust covering the fevered flesh.

You are fifteen and you don't know who you are, but that's okay. He's going to tell you. You wear dresses the color of chewing gum, jeans that bind your legs like Saran wrap around sliced meat—you need to look hot but not slutty. You stand curled because boys like vulnerability. You thought you were a bouquet of flowers but you are only an empty glass vase.

II. Flora

Without the ground, the flowers flourish. They sink their vines into dark gaping crevices and slither until there is only mounds of verdant limbs, strangling the trees and smothering vegetation until it withers. Blossoms erupt from their smooth skin, but the people devour them gratefully.

He arrives with honey coated hair and caresses of freckles. Sunflowers could grow from his palms and he exhales galaxies. You realize this is what you've been awaiting. He is in a band. You want to be his music. He plucks your vocal cords and presses the keys of your ribs and it is tantalizing. You're frantic for more like a fat girl scrounging kitchens for sweets.

III. Fauna

The males of every species die first. And without them, the females riot. The bears claw at each others wombs and the does grow antlers to tear through toughened fur. Nature turns herself into a jungle—sweat and war and blood. But then, there is peace and it is like they never fought.

On your first date, he picks you up in an old Corolla and it's somehow endearing. You are simmering in fruit-scented perfume and your arms are glazed with lotion. He flirts with the girl at the ticket counter and says she has pretty eyes. You boil. Through two hours of gunshots, headshots, bodyshots, you imagine all the ways you could hurt her. He takes your hand.

IV. Cultas

People don't panic. They thought it would end with zombies, aliens, robots but it is only earth. So, botanists smear pesticides on choking branches, zoologists shove articles of femininity and hysteria, and the others stampede to the office or tend to children, ignoring all the collapse.

He pulls you to the backseat of his car and smacks your lips with his. You start with eyes open but close them because that's how it's supposed to be. He tastes like nothing. Just wet—sticky summer dew or saliva. You're stuffed with tongue and teeth as he presses your skull to the window. Leftover needles where he shaved burn your cheeks. Flies writhe in your stomach.

V. Plaga

They call it the living dead, the body-snatcher, the soul-sucker. Paralysis is the first symptom. Motionless vessels litter the streets. Are they people or only bodies? Parts they don't need turn to ash: nose, legs, arms, eyes. Then, they are but organs, and those rot too. It all returns to the earth.

The car's seats are soft and worn. You focus on that. Your hands are cold and splotchy like old vegetables. He takes one of them and puts it on his dick: you can feel it through his jeans. His fingers crawl up your shirt and seize your breasts, pinching and pulling the tissue. You stay still because you are supposed to want love. His mouth never leaves yours. You are being eaten alive.

VI. Mortem

The survivors are few. They roam the earth like plastic bags in wrathful wind. The only sounds now are buzzing and billowing. Buildings crumble to piles of splintered wood and abandoned books and rusted billboards. Then, there is only earth but day and night still continues.

He pulls away. Crimson gloss stains his lips, and his milky sweat melts with yours. He is smiling when he says "that was fun," and he puts your hair behind your ear. It gives you hope. He drops you off at your house and waits until you've unlocked your front door. He doesn't speak to you again, but you keep grasping. Grasping at nothing. Like a child reaching for fairytales.

New Mexico

At eighteen, she retired from snakeskin boots and yellow desert shrubs. Mi casa es tu casa, siempre, her grandmother had said, holding her with calloused and wrinkled hands. The same hands that sewed blankets of wool and fed her tomatoes picked from the dry earth. The hummingbirds sang to her as she left and the smell of roasting green chile danced with the air. She drove away while the sun painted her cheeks the color of watermelon. She never knew there was a place where stars weren't visible at night. Sometimes she would go to one of the parks and lie in the sandbox, pretending it was warm and her grandmother was with her, braiding her hair and whispering mi nieta, eres tan hermosa. Other times, she would only sit caged by apartment walls with chipped turquoise paint, and let her tears wash store-bought tomatoes.

My Lover Melts into Ocean

While in bed, wrinkled collagen sheets and blanket-drowned heads,
she tells me the seagulls spin in her ribcage, plunge her intestines,
scavenge for more severed muscle and dust.
I trace the trench between her breasts down to her
caved belly. She feels like seaweed
and I cry on her cracked skin.
She holds me as earth eats the
moon.

By morning, her fingers
turn to sand in my hair.

Maybe this is like Virginia Woolf?
She says, laughing over breakfast, slimy
and cold. Her eyes, like cinnamon
or washed sunset, are now
glittering white pearls.
I reply, some are meant to
dry up. Her frown drips
to her neck.

We shower. She morphs
tinged green and dizzy. Her hair falls out in
clumps along with dull seashells and shriveled jellyfish.
Tears burst across her cheeks and I
swathe her in my arms. By
letting go, she'll slide
down the drain.

We wade the beach together.
Kiss with salty, sopping lips and she whispers
sbb sbb sbb sbb.
The first wave
crashes against her body and she is
mist.
A shriek echoes.
Still, I run after her, breaking the wet and dirt,
before stepping into her murky unknown depths.