

2. *alabama reunion*

before the car even started someone was sick — Mom was pale, sweating out her freckles
and so
we did not want
to be there

and so my sister wanted to be nowhere
shouting into her red toddler hands
Open this door! I want to run away!

shouting Life is hard! and shouting harder
at Dad's laughter behind the wheel

parked in the gravel driveway in the night

then (oh!) the steam
the pink and green tile the sloped
sides two fruits ripened deep
seeded in the ground a boundary
a high glass wall
to swim under to be mermaids

bursting onto the stage
from inside to the cool stars
out there
the novelty
the two of us
the night world

3. south road, chapel hill

Trick question: the skin is the largest organ. And I gather the water beneath it.

Glass walls point up over a greenhouse growing tired people. One panel cracked under the voices' weight and oh, we are all so young, we'll say later, oh now everything collapses into one line

One light, one blue point. I am walking past the cemetery and the elderly gingko my brother will define for me in years

Yes years and years in the same skin that returns to its boundaries

Closing in on sunset, one rectangle of light turned on its side and twisted, warping like wet wood

One light opened down like the unattended eighth floor roof door. You and I stand on top of the library pointing our arms out towards the cities we chose

One light broke down on me like defiance

How we knew without knowing the undertow, how we were held without holding at the

edge of everything

I gather the water wide in each arm, I make a bushel
towed to the hipbone and bursted above

Balloons and lanterns, eyelashes, wishes following the horizon. Little flames, little
strangenesses, follow me out of the light.

4. *koz park*

Take one tablet by mouth daily. Try to move

Move to try to inhabit your body some way that feels less like falling on the crown of your hard head, more like swimming

More like singing, yes more like singing a song you surprise yourself to remember

(Sing — how you had forgotten, how you had been away — sing, come pick me up, like a snail or like a hawk)

Bluewhite pennants point KO at old mud on ochre tiled floors
the whorl and dash of blackshed hairs and signs painted in historic time

Your scalp pulled red under a bubble of whiteblue water —
let it crown you — a habit

A curtain of yellow air beyond the tall windows
where ginkoes hold their yellow leaves close until November
then throw them down like stripped sheets over hazy orange fruit

An older room, broken lintel, blurred window.

5. *sanibel, florida*

Seawater hovering in open windows. Causeway at night. Gardenias and ocean, sweetness and air. Snailshaped stones crushed in the driveway among the little hearty plants, Grandpa telling me to make the shapes of swimming, house full of cooking sounds.

Breathing both above and below, breathing into being new.

Constant Comment iced tea, alligator pond beside the lemon tree. I am reaching with my arms that are my mother's, her sister's, my brother's. Unborn arms and ancient arms. My mother's father moves each elbow, shows us how to laugh in Russian in rhyme. Abide and abide. Yes and I remember reaching for candy, I remember remembering.

Coming to edges. Blue pebbled tile and terracotta bounding the water. Return and return as the lush world comes alive. Pinecone and spore, seaweed and nest and nettle. The jittering coquina, the diving things in tide pools. The shining flecks barely seen, the things the tides waver in and out of reach.

Stardust scraps, bursted balloons, the shudder that says aliveness —

I would live again as a red walking mangrove, long arms plunged into shoreline at the angle of sun, season to season. I would walk again with family limbs, look west in wonder. Look alive, exit singing as the hard edges of remembering wear down — seaglassed in green late light

6. *nashville again*

The sides sloped down as a diamond faceted the deepend. I'd dive and dive for the cool bottom, narrow my elbows. Pores open to the strange blue wet, rippled and pieced, extended to find where fingertips bind me. Where bruises, where scars are on marked legs kicking.

Old swingset scar forms a fulcrum, an axis, I am learning to be held, protected, to shield around the body. I am an also, a oncemore, return and recur

The broken pattern looking for what nearly felt
clenched around tendon
bellyflopped and breathless in a dead float
Leaning into lacunae and hollering for air, the magnolia's solid dinosaur arms stay firm
above — just so
I mean to say that I am leaking and won't be whole tomorrow

7. siem reap, cambodia

Call it ghost, call it pain cave. Call it a shot in the arm or in the dark. Something has followed you across the tropics. Something whispers, twists itself rotten through a watery echo. And you're a thinking animal in sound and wonder, listening as someone blasts Drake and motorcycles, so far away from belonging. Blue and purple in the jungle greenery: what to say without thinking, know without saying. How do you get from here to where the pain sprung from / how cleanse. How do you get taken / get held.

Don't take rocks from the wats and don't tease the monkeys and don't think of the Buddha when you've never learned suffering and suchness.

Don't float when you've never held your own weight.

Legs sink to one side in porous time. Moving in the medium, skin that swells and shrivels as steam forms, as ice forms, as sweat maps shapes, in the wet time, breathtaken.

8. charlotte-douglas international airport

No particular July, just barely night.
Blue lozenges glow into the sky

Tidy backyard grid of it, the catch and hum.
Perspective distances

Life size — yes as large and as little as mine

And I grow too tender for the regulated air, send out green supplicating shoots
A succulent, little living bromeliad

Then: smoke and celebration, slow motion
silent chrysanthemum
extend tendrils, constellations, dendrites

fireworks scatter

Dissipating smoke
Unfair light fading at unnatural height

There's no prayer
crosscheck prepare
Rise above languages
Float free of their texture and find what persists

always ritual
for all call

Yes return and return

wordless

Here I am

dissolving

What doesn't serve me — let it atomize, let it particulate, let it float weightless elsewhere

for my family and friends, and for the water.
love, erin
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