

By

A capstone project submitted for
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University Honors
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APPROVED

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Abstract

watching the poppies bloom

it is natural to feel poetry
when i see you tend to your wildflowers,
whose open-mouthed corollas feed on the photons
boiled one hundred thousand years
in a star's furnace.
i know the hands cutting the overgrown
foliage, recognize the way the petals
lean themselves to your fingertips.
i am sitting, presumably reading
poets who speak from coffins about
this, about you
&i think about the audacity
of seeds from which
these poppies grew, blown here
from some other place
to root just under your wire gate,
blooming toward you still,
as if they know

when you leave

i watch you go

sundrenched amber leaves
flutter
 down
 in spirals
& on my smile rests
impossibly perfect fatigue.

you look back as you turn the corner
 & a part of me understands—
recognizes this well-enough to know reward
 & uncertainty—

this is new to me—
these rhythmic splashes of feeling
sprouting within absence of your eyes
(twin poems i've only just begun to memorize)

leaves fall
& there is something
moving underneath my skin
tightening with hope
 & fear
 & possibility;

i close my eyes and speed through
every step that led
to us
holding one
another &
dawn
making visible your
soft eyelids—

wonder via newborn

my two-month old niece sleeps still—
resting from the crying and the pooping and the eating

a minute ago, i held her while
her frantic mother went to the bathroom,
while confused baby bobbed her head,
unsure of how to hold it still

she kept looking at the sink—
big eyes i followed to faucet.
i turned the knob slow, so the water trickled
like a gutter the day after rain.
& she giggled.
so i closed the knob and turned it again
until i giggled too
& looked to see
that she had fallen asleep.

light patterns

the movie plays—
tragedy unfolding
from a laptop propped between our thighs;
we share a twin-sized bed,
limbs entwining with warmth.

i'm invested in the plot;
predicted the main character's loss
from the first sequence of desperate yearn—

but your head bobs, cradles
into my shoulder & suddenly
the scenes are just light patterns
on a screen—

& ignoring heartbreak
revealing itself,
i stay

& breathe
with you

ode to a super bloom

Spring approaches
this year with a gift:
a super bloom, wildflowers
singing across desert landscapes—
poppies bridging mountains in orange & yellow;
little patches of the purple stalk-things
i don't know the name of—
&each morning
i glance towards the unexpected
flower-paint growing
in an area i've known only dry,
become fertile with possibility—color—
&walking amongst these soft petals
with you
feels more than
i imagined it would,
when you were still silhouette against winter
canvas of my imagination—
it's a smile i return
in these good days still
good, here, at the fresh start of Spring.

rainy day

Pouring, my mother says with authority—
that I came into this world
screaming amid the wet of february.
in my first memory of rain,
i am outside in only underwear and soaked socks
melting into mud—
droplets pelt my skin shivering into bumps,
& i am probably thinking about how the downpour freezes
into stasis when i look up.
inside, far away, i can hear the sizzle of meat,
the familiar steps of love—
but i wear the cold, the wet—

in my memory, it's because of this
that after i am sick:
steam escapes me in shuttered breaths,
& the bitter taste of tears fall
from sad clouds—
but this is memory
& not the point,
which is:
my mother running through
mud & hugging me away with a towel—
out of the rain &
into the warmth
of Home.

windy morning

i wake to wind whistling through my cracked window—
pine trees thrash against walls outside
& palm frond corpses scatter bloodless lawn—
i go out to collect mail, look around
& the world is wind—
invisible & cold & endless-
ly pushing towards somewhere i do not know—
i am terrified
of change—
ten companies account for most of the carbon emissions
produced by the U.S. & where am i?
i run to my plants,
the pots turned over,
young stems crooked at the dirt—
i bring them inside and tend to them,
protected by the wind
but not by its whistling—
i fix them in place,
give them water
knowing
whatever happens
at least these
i can save

a new sort of love

my infant niece wields a single potent word
with a well-practiced swing: a weapon
against this terrifying new world.
i know that if i ask for a hug—
she will shake her head,
scrunch her face,
and scream
No!

i also know that
if i
 slowly
 inch
 closer

with arms stretched forward like wings;
my chest exposed—

a smile will sneak across her
cheeks, until, finally,
she concedes—
collapsing
into my arms
as I raise her
up to
hold

threading the seams

i find a thin whisper of you
on my jacket—
weaving into the fabric
at my shoulder, curling into itself—
i pull out the strand
&examine it in the sunlight.

with you, the world
whirls in its axis—
seconds lose their sense
&the hours of love
rest on this thread of hair—
empty candle glass
on my bed stand—
the smell of you
upon my pillow—

&it's this dead strand,
these traces i find,
love still
renewing—
plucked from your head,
&embedded into me.

to early love

live, sweet infant
growing like a lump in my chest—
you are the product
of dreams & nightmares
roosting atop your arterial
perch, hiccupping between
each beat—

from the moment you hatched
at the possibility of hope, i felt
what it would take to keep—
this anxious heart, offered
to a sun
without forecast—

little one,
extend the secrets
religions are founded on—

if one day
i should find those branches
vacant
whatever you take
please,

leave a feather

jetcloud

beneath two-pronged
pencil strokes of cloud created
by a jet in flight—

 my niece
 (as she is rolling
 down a grassy
 slope)
stops—

she stares,
(& in the pool
 of her young eyes
 the jet crosses the ocean of sky)

we both watch
as it leaves behind
a trail to follow
with our sight (feeling
the unknowable narrative
of the pilot maybe
probably
looking

down)

love ya

i said when we parted at the crosswalk—

& what i meant to—

i don't like seeing you walk away;

& what i meant—

you fill me with so much light & sometimes
it burns

& what i—

don't
leave

you make me better

but the ground
shakes underneath
my feet &
i'm scared i'm scared i'm—

when we parted you said

love you too

& i looked back to catch your eyes

& you already set them forward—

i knew i would see you

later that day,

but just hearing those words,

i felt for a moment

the wind takes from me

it's windy
when you comb your fingers
through my hair&find
a single white strand,
dead amid the black;
you tell me i'm getting old,
i joke that you just stress me out—

sometimes i sag my cheeks
&study my aged reflection—
imagining stories
hidden in folds
more future wrinkles—
i'll entertain fantasies—
our hands, mapped with gnarled veins
&locked in eternal warmth—
two pitiful old fools
foolishly burning still.

you pluck the snowy hair out
and give it to me;
i name it after you
just before the wind carries it away

we are still young,
i know—
still naïve,
still able to make stupid decisions
and learn from them.
i am not afraid of age—
i am only afraid it will come
at the cost
of losing
this

to a girl-scout

i evaded you today
by strategically walking beside a large
man, who, in his largeness
provided ample cover;

i have nothing against you
or your delicious snacks,
only that i would rather not pay
five dollars for cookies—
but, don't be discouraged—
if you had caught me & asked
i would have given you all i have.

for alexis

when you scribble circles
across plain paper
i think:
what an artist you'd be.

when you whack away
at stubborn piano keyboard keys,
i snap my fingers and dance
to the chaos.

when you spread your arms
and bolt forward
yelling: *I'm flying!*
i cannot stop myself:
i see a pilot brave against the wind;
an astronaut grasping the depths of space.

when I gaze at you
i see more poetry than i'll ever grasp;
i see a doctor, a surgeon
a lawyer, an activist,
a president

right now:
you smile there
on the driveway,
your cheeks smeared green
with chalk—
an ocean of green fish,
green half-circles, and green suns
below you.

to poetry

forgive me:
enough with the birds—i know—
but allow me one more:

i sat, listening to my love speak
about small, morning things—
repairs & groceries & little, small futures,
when a sparrow landed on a nearby ledge.

i thought of Dickenson,
quiet in lifting dark by soft whine of gas,
head cradled by hand just the moment
before she lifts it to pick up the pen
to dip it in the black swell—

& it's a flimsy connection: that sparrow,
her, the dark—
but that's the magic, isn't it?
me, you, and all our lost histories
will join her in the dirt.

but we have this small sparrow
in light that too is finite,
pecking at small food bits
on a small ledge,
cocking its head our way,
asking:
what are you doing?