dead forest
train on the tracks
basha.
gym class ghazal
untitled
untitled
yesterday i talked to mother.
the heartwalker
untitled
untitled
travel to the wall
snow
oranges
palinode
for anais
tableland
deus x
sadie
surreptitiously
robert donat in an ambulance with me
study #5
mangled gusts and timpani
genesis
narrowly avoiding the headlines
untitled

nate ndosi
emily alspector
sophie taylor
carly yasinski
rachel macarthur
anastasia nikolis
justin dainer-best
j.i. eagles, t. eagles, y. lee, k. riley
anonymous
emma buckingham
jacob carroll & hope kaye
eve gleichman
justin dainer-best
isaac wheeler
karina puttiev
rose howse
ryan lin cameron
casey ross
isaac wheeler
emily tartanella
rebecca morgan & sean hughes
noel capozzalo
kristina birkel
kristina birkel
anonymous

Dead Forest

nate — ndosi
different dreams
missing pieces
untitled
a great working
two love sonnets
magpies
under antique fire
from an airplane at night
smokes
talesin’s grove
robin
sleeping

andrew smith
walker anderson
anonymous
noel capozzalo
andrew ross
sean hughes
walker anderson
sean hughes
casey ross
nate ndosi
dylan ravenfox
jonah loeb
I still have your name in my phone book, 
and I guess you still have my translucent orange lighter 
you borrowed the night we met the kid 
wearing that uncomfortable swastika shirt 
and didn't know what to say. I was kind of sad 
that I'd never get my lighter back, because 
I didn't get a chance to say goodbye 
before catching my flight.

I planned to visit, maybe for a week 
during winter break when I would want to see 
the California sunshine, and you would stand, 
as always, in front of the vending machine 
for periods exceeding twenty minutes 
debating aloud the merits of one food over another, 
finally getting the pink-frosted animal crackers and Doritos, 
something sweet, something salty. And you would sit 
outside at night, alone for no reason other than to sit outside, 
blond hair shining and cigarette lit, and I would find you 
and sit down and say little.

I didn't know until I was invited to your funeral 
by someone I'd never met and never will 
that you were killed in a car crash in the middle 
of the day, on a Wednesday or maybe a Monday.

I didn't go. It was three thousand miles away 
and I had classes.

But you were seventeen. You always lied, 
all summer telling me you were eighteen. 
I don't think you were lying to date me, or for any reason 
beyond the reasons you liked to sit outside alone or spend 
as long as possible weighing the merits of each packaged food group.

My brother's friend died the same way at seventeen, 
the summer of Princess Di. I was eight and seventeen 
was old, not old enough to die but old enough that I was sure 
he had lived, but now seventeen is sixty years 
too young at least.

I didn't go over winter break, and sometimes 
(maybe a little more than sometimes) I forget, 
and when I next go to California, you will still be there, 
in my phone book at least, 
and I am afraid I will not remember until I call you.
Ugh it’s like she’s never even shaved
she said but I was 12 why should I have shaved.

She inspected my legs in the locker room, her eyes peeled
I wished my legs were smooth as if I had just been peeled
like a banana. Except a banana with breasts.
Mallory Jordan had them and if I had to grow up I wanted breasts.

I found my mother’s scissors and began the process of removing
each hair from my leg because to grow breasts something needed removing.

So my leg hairs fell like tiny soft
feathers to the floor of the den, without them I would be soft,

but in the right places. Some places
would be hard, I was sure, although not sure of which places.

Only when my mother caught me peeling off my hair
she said no and looked sort of sad with her hand in her hair.

My skin felt hard like gravel during gym that Friday,
so from then on I shaved every Friday.
Yesterday I talked to mother.

How the fuck’d you talk to ma?
you ask,
but it’s like she used to say in her living room,
pants neatly-plaited,
it’s the thought that counts.

She never held my hand when I was younger,
just let me tag along behind
as though she were a pole,
and I were a magnet.
But when her days at the bakery finished,
and she’d drag her feet through the back door,
sloughing off jackets,
I rushed down the linoleum hallway
to greet her return,
and ate my pastry,
and grinned.

It’s not as though I can’t imagine.
And it’s not as though the house is silent
late at night, when I crawl to the kitchen
and hold my knees by the refrigerator vent.
Sometimes she whispers things,
and sometimes I can hear them.
O! Havermuse I call on you
To help me tell this tale
And coat my tongue with stories true
To every last detail.

There is a heart on Hannum Green,
True origins unknown,
Its nighttime walker seldom seen,
Paces all alone.

Four and twenty years ago,
Minus twenty years,
Began a process long and slow
Of loneliness and tears.

There was a tall and handsome man
Whose heart was not his own.
His lover in a distant land
Would call him on the phone.

Due to too few cell phone bars
He had to walk outside.
’Neath canopy of shining stars,
He walked and talked and cried.

Mysteriously, his feet were led,
His soul so ripped apart,
And unbeknownst to him he tread
The outline of a heart.

And to this day the heart remains
A symbol of devotion.
Through four long years of tears and pains,
Their love was never broken.

Should fates allow and spirits smile
Perhaps tonight you’ll spy
This figure on his lonely mile
Beneath the nighttime sky.

john ivy eagles,
thad eagles, yoojin lee, & kent riley
Do you trip on my heels?
A little, I say, but my bones sigh yes.
Because our arms have days,
Because I want to seed you in all my beds,
but we only have a handful of soil and a soupcan.
Because without you, my heart is a cicada shell,
this quiet husk that misses you dearly. Yes.
You and I are buried house-deep in snow this year. The icicles on the French windows have become so thick that there is almost nothing left to see outside. What we can see is blurred and white from the iced windows, the way someone sitting across from you might look through a drinking glass. If we’d known, we would have painted our walls vibrant colors before the snow came, but we didn’t know, so they’re white, too. If we had known, we would have prepared better.

We got snowed in on November 21. It was the best snowfall we’d ever had, and the earliest. School was cancelled and I was just able to slip through the front door in the big rubber rain boots you got me last year for my birthday. We went sledding at the Takoma hill and the breaks on your sled didn’t work because the snow was so deep. You sat in the back and wrapped your legs round me. I called, “Look out below!” because there were other red-faced kids there, too, at the bottom. But my sled moved slowly, and little darting snowflakes stung our faces so we got out and rolled the rest of the way down. You beat me to the bottom but only because you were wearing a puffy coat and I had a trench. We laughed so hard I thought we might not be able to stand and make our way back to the top. Snow soaked through my coat and to my skin and I didn’t notice because we were still laughing. We walked back to my house and put our coats in the drier. Do you remember? They came out five sizes smaller than when we had put them in.

“Well,” I said, “I was going to buy Pox a winter coat, but fuck it, these are perfect.” You laughed and we grabbed Pox and zipped him up in your coat and he trotted around the house barking and his tail thumped happily against the carpet. Your brother Cody came over, too. We gave him my coat and he complained about the pink but he liked the attention it got him, so he did Prince impressions and we laughed because he got the words wrong. Your sister Eliza came over and made tickets to the Cody Show out of purple construction paper, and then she tore them at the entrance to my living room.

We never got around to buying new winter coats.

The next weekend we couldn’t open our front doors because of the snow and ice, so I called you on the telephone and you told me about the refrigerator magnets you were making from vintage magazines. I made them too, but I bet yours were better. We made bets on when they would make us go back to school. You said January 2 and I said the 7th, because
that was my birthday and my lucky number. We decided the loser would have to pull your sled uphill the next time we took it out.

You're nuts, you said. No way are we out of school that long.

You're probably right. I like the number seven.

See how much you like it when you're pulling that sucker uphill!

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah you'll see.

My comforter was warm. I'd lie beneath it with the Saturday crossword, because it was the hardest puzzle of the week and took me the longest. And then the power went out.

"Hey, what's wrong with a little candle-lit Scrabble game?" my dad would say. And then I'd beat him because I knew all the two-letter words that you always challenged, or Q words that weren't followed immediately by a U.

Qats is not a word, he'd say.

It is.

Challenge.

Qats was a word.

Things got cold inside. I used a flashlight to read, but the batteries ran out fast. We couldn't see the food we were cooking and at night it was especially hard. My dad would do things like accidentally mix salt into his coffee, and he'd take a long, concentrated breath before dumping it down the drain and pouring a new cup. We had no more dog food so my mom would let Pox eat any couscous or tomato soup we didn't finish. The mail stopped coming, probably because the snow on the streets was so high. I think it was too much for the snowplows because they would just break down in the middle of a road and get buried under more snow. There were no more Saturday crosswords. There were no more crosswords. I hadn't talked to you and I wondered how you were doing, if you were still finding things to do. I saw you had hung beads from your window but I couldn't tell the colors. January 7 came but I didn't know it.

I think it was maybe halfway into February or maybe it was March when we started running out of food. I'd watch the blurred outlines of helicopters dropping packages through chimneys, but ours was blocked to keep out squirrels, and our fireplace had never worked, at least since I was born. I liked the sound of those propellers because they broke the silence that had taken over our house like some horrible illness. There wasn't much to talk about anymore. Pox started barking all the time, maybe because we couldn't give him a walk or because he was bored of tomato soup. When we heard those propellers, the three of us and Pox would gather by the window and listen in case the engines were coming our way. Maybe they had thought of us, with our blocked chimney, and were sending us food a different way. I started to hate those helicopters. I wondered if you had enough food because your family had two more people than mine.

I wish we had squirrels now, is what my dad said.

That's gross.

How do you know? I bet they'd taste nutty.

Dad.

I'm sorry. (I have not heard a joke since)

I forgot your name today. I forget when it was I knew you. The cold has made me numb. I have forgotten how to cry. I have forgotten how to laugh. I have forgotten how to write. Sometimes I get the cold and the hunger confused because they are both so painful. Sometimes I confuse them with memories of you. I don't wonder about you anymore because I cannot think about anything that is not real.

My dad's words are frigid.

What day is today? I asked.

Today.

What does that mean?

It means it's cold.

Are we going to die?

Hush.

It's okay if we are, I just want to know.

We're not going to die.

Okay.

Okay what?
Just okay.
Okay. (These were the last words we spoke)

My mother's words don't make sense to me.
Where should we go in the summer? she said to me.
What?
In the summer.
I think it might be summer.
But where should we go?
I don't know. Where do you want to go?
How about Tahiti?
How about the sun?
Okay. (These were the last words we spoke)

The dog is gone. My mom was starting to look at him funny but I don't like to think about that.
We were hungry. We don't talk about it. We don't talk anyway. Sometimes my dreams are more real
than the cold. I can see you there, in sandals and a skirt. I hear the music we used to play about hot
air balloons and falling in love, but I don't remember why we wrote them or if they meant anything
to us. Your voice is a ringing in my ears and I wish I could tell you how beautiful I always thought
it was. I see you and you are on my back porch popping chocolate-covered coffee beans. Your hair
is this great sweet potato shade of red, and you have it tied back in a messy bun. I'm sitting, too, on
a rusted lawn chair next to you reading about washed-up celebrities with my feet kicked up on your
knees. I think you look like Rita Hayworth when I see you on my back porch.

It's October. It's a sauna outside.
I know.
Can't wait to sled.
Your sled has no breaks.
That's the best part.

I hear an airplane outside. I hope it comes to you.

Oranges

Soft flakes fall in late July
when the sun should be reddening my neck.
Instead, the ground crinkles with my steps,
and Jess and Nina make sleds out of TV trays.
Last time it snowed here was in 1977, they say on the news,
but the grass seems happy to roll in on itself and be covered.
It's as though we're all on a holiday, all out on our streets;
K and I meet our neighbors for the first time.
"It's beautiful," they say, their eyes wide like buttercups.
We smile and shake cold hands.

The next morning we awaken to rivers in the streets,
the sun vigorously aloft,
and the water licks at our doorsteps like in a milk bowl,
while Jess sets paper boats afloat
and Nina dips her toes in the icy lapping.
K and I stay in the living room all morning
and mop the seepage from the marble floor with bath towels,
wavering through the damp streets,
in bare shirt-sleeves and holding sweaty hand in hand.
I didn’t mean to spare your vanity——
I only wanted you to keep wearing it.
I wanted it to be the leaves, soggy with rain,
And you, the narrow, tiptoed trunk.

Or: a rickety rasping ladder
Rattling under my feet
As I climb out from my ribs
Climbing out the drooping roof
Of a lurching barn, through the rafters
Up through the holocaust of blonde,
Burning hay in the loft—and up to where
My weight would snap your thinnest branch——

But I lied, all the same, I did;
The dress does make you look fat.

---

Your mouth is smiling; it does not hold.
Instead it dips its bones into my shoulder
imprecisely——
feverish and insincere——
and charts your territory onto mine
dividing skin and follicles,
salt and seed. Your callused prints
hand-translate
my punch-hole breathing into seismic code.
They curve in on the spinal column,
tuned finely to a tongue,
like moths nestled in a Rorschach——
their wire legs whisper
intertwined
so as not to suggest
apartness.

---

isaac
—-wheeler

karina
—-puttieva
Avi's mother spoke to him a little less as he grew older. In his younger childhood she had been paid to record the celestial happenings above the plateau, and she'd treated her son like a little apprentice. When it came to her astronomy she was brazen and scientific but it didn't matter, because Avi took it upon himself to make up stories about the constellations, comets, and on one occasion the vibrant eastern lights. He had never seen the color violet before, and hadn't since. That was shortly before she retired, and thus began to speak to him less. So often, the topic of their conversations had been related to her work, and in general she simply was softspoken. He missed talking to her less than he missed her barnful of astrological instruments which suddenly lay abandoned, the scales off kilter and the lens of the telescope uncleaned.

The plateau they lived on was excellent for astronomy. Live on the groundland, his mother would say, and you wouldn't be able to see anything – so many trees and buildings in the way. The electricity would make the air murky. He'd always been curious to see these things, the electricity especially. But the hike down from the plateau was really not for children. The slope was nearly vertical, and the soil was almost pure clay so that any foothold you got would slip slowly. Any time that he went near the edge he could feel the ground threaten to give way beneath his bare feet, and upon returning he'd have to wash the strange russet color away in the bath.

The plateau was the color of a sunset without the light. Its oranges and reds were dense, dusty, opaque. Burgundy sediment gathered at the bottom of the shallow stream that ran behind the house where Avi and his mother lived. Its smooth banks were smeared with clay and spots of mica small as ants. It was while walking along the stream that Avi met a young girl.

She wasn't from the plateau, and her frock was stained orange from climbing up its side from the groundland. Avi thought of the trees she must have seen with her very own eyes – touched, maybe. Even climbed. There were no trees on the plateau. Avi and his mother lived. Its smooth banks were smeared with clay and spots of mica small as ants. It was while walking along the stream that Avi met a young girl.

“Myla,” she said, and he twisted around.

“I could swear the sky's a different color from here. It's bluer where I'm from.”

Tableland
boiling to make sure his mother was still in the kitchen, he kissed Myla on the forehead.

Ten minutes later Avi came to discover that her clay-stained frock hid a strange mark—a faded burn of sorts, across her chest and stomach. When he saw it he jumped away, knocking one of the larger compasses off its clay table. He did not want to look back at it. He wondered how to not, and at the same time she left the barn as quickly as a sunsnake after prey.

That night he took his bowl of wild onion soup to the edge of the plateau and sat dangerously, letting his legs hang over the side. He looked down at the tiny scoops and holes left in the clay by Myla’s feet and hands. He imagined her racing the sun downward, holding her frock against the wind with one of her hands. He wondered then if he’d venture to the groundland ever, and after thinking hard about it, he wasn’t sure. Nothing but herbs were left in the soup, so he poured it over the edge, digging his fingers into the clay to balance himself. He wondered why he couldn’t hear it hit the distant ground below.

So I saw God the other day sitting on a park bench, nursing a cigarette, watching the sprightly, West-Side joggers sweat and the Brooklyn nannies knitting.

He wore a lapis-colored tracksuit and grinned at a kid who wore the same but the tyke scowled and his mother (with a name tag that read “Dawn”) adjusted their route to the opposite direction.

I would later think of all the things I should have asked him, given the omnipotence of his might, but I was too distracted by the skaters, flying then falling with furrowed brows and grim mouths, so all I could do was ask for a light.
Sadie had a deep mahogany face etched with lines that cut her countenance like canyons and canals. 89 years had carved her like the Colorado cut the Grand Canyon: slowly, relentlessly. Her high cheekbones, like hills above the valleys of her face, sat astride a large, bulbous nose that shone in the yellow light of the subway car. This great head rested upon a jutting neck that bled down to shoulders sloped into an arching hunchback. Despite it’s grotesque disfigurement, the grace of its curvature was undeniable, and from it down through her toes Sadie swayed, slightly, with the motion of the turning tracks, her long arms waving in a slow, rhythmic cycle.

She sighed, deeply, and closed her eyes; it had been a long day. Almost of its own accord, her huge, veined hand swung up and touched her hair, feeling random spikes and the bits sticking out at odd angles in unexpected places. She unpeeled her eyes and examined her reflection in the door window opposite. Passing lights in the tunnel whipped by. Every other second her reflected face was scorched away by a flash of burning orange, or occasionally cooler blue if the train passed one of the tunnel’s emergency exits.

Her feet hurt. She’d spent 12 hours running around those damn hospital hallways, which were too white and too sterile for her taste. Even with her orthopedic shoes – black boxes of rubber and leather, with wide toes and extra arch support – the stress was too much. Her brittle bones and muscles creaked and cramped their disapproval.

But there were no seats in this car. Nor were there any on those either side of it. At 6:30pm on a weekday, the subway packs like a well-rolled cigarette: each passenger a bit of tobacco tightly bunched against her neighbors. One had enough space to move about, in this particular car, but the seats were filled and there were eight stops and a five-block walk before Sadie could take her black boxes off and lie down. She would put on her slippers – gifts from Michael the last time she saw him whole – and shuffle to the kitchen to heat the kettle for chamomile tea. In her mind’s eye, her ugly floral nightgown – she knew it was ugly but this, too, had been a gift of his – fluttered lightly about her angry ankles, while her shower cap sat proudly upon her, the crown to this glorious ensemble.

Lost in these images, Sadie didn’t hear the soft call at first. “Ma’am?... Ma’am?... Excuse me, ma’am?...” She had closed her eyes without realizing it, and as the words softly floated through the darkness to her and materialized against her ear-drums, she lifted her heavy eyelids and gazed about in search of their source. After a moment, she saw that a boy stood before her. No, he wasn’t a boy; he was a man, only young in the face and slight of stature. He barely came up to her chest, and his blue eyes reflected the long yellow lines of the lights hovering above her dark head. With a small, light hand, he pointed to an empty orange seat a few feet away. “Ma’am,” he said again. “Would you like to sit?”

Sadie blinked. “Yes, honey,” she said, each word sliding out in deep, honeyed tones. The man-child moved to the side to let her through, his glossy chestnut loafers springing from one step to the next. Her black boxes shuffled by, whisking along the yellowed linoleum of the car floor, and her body let out a silent moan as she bent it to sit down, arthritic joints arguing with each small motion of her muscle. But finally she was cocooned safely in her orange, plastic cradle, between a well-dressed white twenty-something and an older Latina woman with a small brown child on her lap. The baby looked up at Sadie with black eyes and put four fingers in his mouth. Spittle pooled around the digits and spilled over, cascading down his chin.

Sadie smiled and leaned her head back against the plexiglass window, her eyes shut in the wake of 89 years and 12 hours of exhaustion. She breathed deeply and thought, briefly, about the blackness. She was almost home.
I

A gull’s foot slices
through the veil of water,
turning up the corners
of a whistling paper cut—
the toenail he neglected
to trim rasps a groove
in the filigree of ice
that he is too light to crack.

II

A man’s penis plinks
into the still water
in the toilet that he perches on
when he leans forward
to pick up the “coffee table” book
of French gardens on the tiles,
and is stimulated
by the coy porcelain.

III

A “cat’s eye” marble glances
off the storm drain slat
and into a taut, poised puddle.
The wet street plays for keeps!

Bicycle tires drag
through the puddle
like knuckles, and the cat
sees them knead its surface.

IV

On a cold night
Bright needles of rain
Tiptoe across my eyelids.
triage by lipstick doesn’t heal, rather illustrates hairlines and punctures in harlot-stultifying-orange. so kiss me.
"We hope well that 17 politicians of a certain age suffer from circumcision anxiety and seek from世界各地 inches of dried water. But no vision aids a third. And as he turns to stab another, the scene de saba fella and "we face into yellow & redness" and all courteous flow over on to colors, wherein we bake or make the daily bread of employment: Colors that make us a living being thing of life's automatized mass.

He died for YOUR sins!*

For more on the mad chef, see "Study of Two Years" G.

*Leviticus 15:13-15
Of course it was all a show!—Suicide. You stand pigeon-toed and boyish when you hear that word, the ugly Latin—but you are too delicate. Words change your architecture. This time, like last time, must have been—just a pebble of a word.

Something about the sound of it bouncing off your chest, right?—Reluctant—heavy machinery cranks into motion. You burning in there, expanding the skin. Your muscles scream to be free from the bone.

Where was I when it happened? Who asks? I was busy being petted, betrothed to everyone’s favorite daughter. Where am I now? Down here—architect in the playpen. Still learning how to sit up, I try to assemble you from where I lie.

Angel of mangled gusts and timpani—heavy rolling rush, how did you find a form in grit and water? It is too brittle—too slow. If I hold you, will you knock me down?

Mangled Gusts and Timpani

noel capozzalo
we met in the dark – of november, i think – the day after he dumped me. i trudged into english late & found an open chair, next to you, & you watched as i blew my soul into my sleeve. my shoulders rocked back & forth as i cried quietly/thickly through the whole movie & it broke your heart to see so much pain. the lights came on & we were grateful that the movie was sad so everyone else was sad-eyed too so i didn’t have to explain the salty heart-puddles on my desk: you had never met him but you were mad at him anyway.

that year the autumn was pretending to be spring & you told me to meet you at pine lake park. i didn’t want to wear sunny clothes or leave my shell but you said in an official-sounding voice that i needed the serotonin or i’d die of the melancholy & i believed you because you said you were going to be a brain surgeon when you grew up & that was kind of like a doctor. we lay on the grass together & breathed in the day.

on the nature walk in biology we lagged behind & spoke of our kin. your dad was pretty cool but your mom was a you-know-what & your brother & sister were a bong in a hazy room & an open bottle sweating circles into the mahogany, respectively. i told you under the canopies/above the roots that i have a mammoth family but no one in mine is a bong or a bottle or a you-know-what. i picked a dandelion & tucked it into your braid. i said you were beautiful. you giggled & i didn’t.

junior year we were busier than we could’ve ever imagined. we waited to have another sleepover for 1.7 forevers & finally our schedules concurred. we had always felt safe with each other so there were no secrets, no turning around, & when you took off your bra (gracelessly – you were always rough around the edges) i noticed that your breasts were different, fuller, more feminine. i tingled & then rolled over in bed & looked out the window so you wouldn’t notice. look, i said, it’s andromeda. i looked at you sideways & thought to myself that you could be a perseus.

i had a dog that i loved very much. when he died, you were sad for me but not for him because you never liked dogs – they’re too cutesy & slobbery, you said. (it was one of your less sensitive moments.) you always wanted a parrot so you could teach it to say things like fuck & shit but your you-know-what would never let you, so you got a beta fish in a little glass bowl with a fake plant instead. one day we sat & absentmindedly watched betty the beta swim round & round the fern until our eyes hurt – now i think we did that because you didn’t want me to look at you – & you told me you’d never had an orgasm. i thought to myself that i could tell you how but then i knew if i tried the words would get stuck inside like peanut butter so i just said that sucks.

then someone new came along – your first. he was tall, dark & handsome, as they say, & i didn’t see you for a while. one night you called me & made small talk. after we got through school & the weather & a couple of hollow nothings like how you’d had the sweetest apple at lunch that day, you told me in awkward/chopped phrases that he wanted to please you but couldn’t. embarrassedly you told me that once you faked it & were thrilled with how convincingly wet it was, that you even wondered if maybe it wasn’t fake after all, until you saw the horrifying yellow spot on the sheets. (it’s okay. i did that once too.) then you hung up the phone & he woke up & snuggled up behind you with his arms around your waist & his head on your shoulder. you shivered & the next thing you knew you were pregnant.

i had trouble sleeping the night i heard the news. when i woke the next morning, there were a few small heart-stains on my pillowcase, velvet-black from the mascara i’d been too distracted to wash off. i remembered the heart-puddles on my desk back in november & thought that really they were probably just tears.
Narrowly Avoiding the Headlines

I was sitting in the backseat. I remember the snow and the ice, the sudden loss of traction, the car dead ahead, and the screams which may or may not have been my own. I see it now: it says “Eight killed in head-on collision” and I become a name with no face.

Mom was sitting behind the driver’s seat. She remembers the truck that pulled out too late and the way the van swerved, but not hard enough, and she remembers the surreal calm that came over her right before it happened. She sees it too, but differently: “Four killed in Duluth collision.” Her last thought before the crash was that I will have to raise my sisters. How could I ever be Mommy to three little girls?

Aunt Sara was driving. She remembers the voice that said we’re all going to die and then the sight of the other car veering into a ditch, grazing the side of the van as it passed. She sees no headline. I can’t sleep much anymore. When I do, I dream in cheap black ink.
She forgot how she won
the old ribbons tacked to the wall.

She sees plastic stars on the ceiling
better than the real thing.

Her bookshelf is filled with old National Geographics
she knows she'll never get around to reading.

Outside her window there's a spot on the street
where the grapefruit truck crashed
it squished against the asphalt
juice flowed to the drain
and watered the lawn.

In elevators she feels guilty sitting on the floor
even if the only witnesses
are cold, glowing buttons
and the reflection in immaculate doors.

different dreams

like the first whispers of morning from
a passenger side window on the turnpike,
like an awakening in the sunrise tide
on the quiet side of the cape,
a new day is almost here.

new lines in the sand.
[surviving nights like nuclear winter]
to watch the horizon scream “i’m wide awake!”
to watch life continue from a hospital bed,
[to breathe spring air after being dead]
offshore breeze floats through the window
like soft synth and guitar, and a lonely
folk singer bleeding out in a bar.

new lines in the sand, new frontiers out west.
[use heart and hands to build the best
from the endless promise of tomorrow]
a sweet word,
mañana.

Missing Pieces

She forgot how she won
the old ribbons tacked to the wall.

She sees plastic stars on the ceiling
better than the real thing.

Her bookshelf is filled with old National Geographics
she knows she’ll never get around to reading.

Outside her window there’s a spot on the street
where the grapefruit truck crashed
it squished against the asphalt
juice flowed to the drain
and watered the lawn.

In elevators she feels guilty sitting on the floor
even if the only witnesses
are cold, glowing buttons
and the reflection in immaculate doors.

like the first whispers of morning from
a passenger side window on the turnpike,
like an awakening in the sunrise tide
on the quiet side of the cape,
a new day is almost here.

new lines in the sand.
[surviving nights like nuclear winter]
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new lines in the sand, new frontiers out west.
[use heart and hands to build the best
from the endless promise of tomorrow]
a sweet word,
mañana.
We sat in a quiet place, an orchard, and you, flicking twigs at my face and hands, denied any play in the matter. You blamed the tree, the ground: They put you here, me here, a task in which they unwittingly engage. And so their work destroys the architecture of our actions, originally designed as cover for a nakedness—pliant to quick hooves.

You smile—perhaps the orchard remembers a time when the girders were not so sure, lingered hesitantly among tangled vectors—tree, ground, sky, bird—a part of the storm. Ready, if not prepared, to die. Not today or on that day—but there, where memory plays time, we lie engaged in that great working.

My neck is fading where you suckled out a purple constellation, but my lips still swirl with supernova teethmarks where you frantically devoured my face. What void could hunger you so?

Churning and gnashing behind the graceful arc of your laugh or your hand, light like drifting, on my back.

A Great Working

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Two Love Sonnets

I.
What blooms upon the iris of your eyes?
Thoughts arising loom like leaves above,
and I sense the shade in your replies.
My hand is here, but you must grasp it, love!

My questions sprout like mushrooms in the dark,
popping up in rings around the problem,
but the biting brusqueness of your bark,
so desperate, stops them soon as they had come.

Uproot these cares of yours, and bring them here.
There, dry the endless flow of unshed tears
the flower drinks, and flood me with your fears.
We’ll laugh about them, and they’ll disappear.

Now take my hand, for everything malign
Lies in the gap between your lips and mine.

II.
A day’s divisions vary with the stars;
the remainder, though, is all that matters.
We part on terms of joy, or not; of these scars
chance meetings are reminders. He shatters,

being moments made man and frize-frame light,
his paper past forgot, and day a gift
unwrapped—night, which wrapped it, balled up tight.
And rapt, I stood, amidst the rubble’s drift.

Within the prism of your eye I lie,
framed in yesterday’s light, where I must stay
until we meet again. Then we can try
to sigh a surplus joy, for the next day.

Love, you see me and I am engendered.
Future, mindset, heart—these I surrender.

andrew
ross
Uncovered roots stirring
shift with sudden shakes and rattles.

Look:
Birds drip from a charred sky
streaked with wisps of tar —
God’s smoker’s lungs.

I let the pennies fall:
tiny engraved years drop to the ground,
splitting the distance
into measured lines of time
or something unnatural —
clock-gears and engine coils
under violent stars.

Ashes sink through fume and tonic,
pooling into familiar figures
as air leaks and groans out of the seams,
curled up in chimney quivers and wind
wrapped in a tidy bow to send to your relatives in Tallahassee.

-- walker

Under Antique Fire

As they hobble with an affected limp
between paroxysms of disinterest
and quiet plateaus of indigestion

where grumbles eulogise and eulogise says,
really, nothing at all, but sparse, empty complaints
that sadly beg for some response —

through skips the hummingbird, vagabond saint,
passing his hat — saying: “Of all this care
that you grip like misers,
I request only a small scrap of scorn,
my sullen friends. Even that would suffice
to fondle my lungs and jostle my wings,

and give me lift enough to rise
above the silt of you.”

-- walker

Magpies

As they hobble with an affected limp
between paroxysms of disinterest
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-- walker
From an Airplane at Night

Version 1

below,
the shape of land is strung,

but here,
I’m spoken for by the furnace sound of the wind and the wings
and the tension that sends us up.

and yet,
of all the lights that reply, I’ll choose the one that lies
amidst the horde, the crowd of sparks
and names itself proudly by burning out.

Version 3

some cloud or fog has intervened
between me and the garish ornaments of earth below:

abundantly dumb, disinterested night, you allow only a misappellation, and pluck it
forcibly;
your lusty insouciance looks ravenous, looks already fed and full with its guile and naked
gape—

within that night there was no commerce among moments, but I blinked in raped
prehension,
awaiting a defeated arrival in the base nest of toiling hills below.

Smokes

---

sean
hughes
---

casey
ross
In red nail polish, Robin has written,

_Had it been only coveting to Eye_

over Sue’s shoulders and it glints under a beam of sunlight. Sue feels the arch of her back like a bent bow, sensuous curve, gaunt trajectory. She looks at the daisy again, still there behind the line where world becomes illusion, and faint translucencies play against surface.

The blood used to rush into Will’s chest. Robin would say, “red breasted”.

Robin is wearing a long skirt and a flannel shirt, heavy eyed, dark rings underneath. She is acutely aware of her own throat, and lifts up her hand, gently running her finger tips over its enclosing structure. It is early and dim and quiet. She likes this time of day, takes a deep breath. There is an attraction, a repulsion in each moment, she thinks, musing, touching her neck, and thinking, suddenly, of milk.

Robin is 22 and has short black hair. Her spine is curved toward the shape of an S. She likes the taste of honey and the smell of wet leaves. The backs of her hands are laced with the soft blue of her veins, undercurrents.

She works at a coffee shop, and after her shift, in the late daylight, she sits at a table outside and watches people pass by. She follows children with her eyes, so that she might catch their gaze, a smile. Sometimes Robin is overcome with rage, and feels she must sit very still. Sometimes she meets the eyes of a passing child when she is in this state, and is overcome.

Robin does not love humanity. She cannot reconcile her vision with that of another. She has never seen the profile of even one of her own eyes. She remembers the eye of a teacher, its protruding curve, as he broke a pencil in half while speaking of Chief Standing Bear.
She sits reclining on the stoop outside, staring at curved stalks of grass, listening for its growth. It is the dawn of the evening, and it smells like it does, after rain. She feels the cool cement of her stoop pushing into her lower back, thinking, that tree is better than I am. The tree emphasizes itself with silence. A bird, having crushed a small insect between the cleavage of his beak, flies away. More silence. Robin thinks, I cannot see the edge. And then, my body enjambed... against body... cannot find the end of the line.

Will lives in an old woman’s empty garage. The light filtering into the garage from one small window is screaming silently. Will is listening. Robin is imagining Will in the room, imagining that he is content. Robin writes the word “content” on the back surface of her hand. Perhaps, Will is thinking of Sue. He was always infatuated with Sue.

Will follows a friend to the old vehicle and they drive against the grain of the night. He feels a pressure pushing into his ribcage as they speed over the dirt road raising a wake of candescent dust. John Hooker is playing loud. “Boom, boom, boom, boom”, he says and then there is the break in it, the music, which makes Will want to open and pour everything out. He suppresses a tear.

A pair of baleful eyes peer out at from a pale green, beat up cutlass, pulling in next to a trailer. Behind, the earth slopes steeply up so that only gleaming tops of passing cars can be seen flickering through trees. Old lawn chairs surround a rotting grey table. A knife, stuck upright in the wood bends back and forth in the breeze, keeping time. Ash is spilling over the lip of a small ceramic bowl, next to an empty pack of unfiltered Eagle cigarettes. There are beer cans, all squashed into themselves. It smells like pine and dirt. There is a board resting against a stump, warped and splitting. Nailed into its center is a large brown wing, long dark feathers spread, a flexed, open hand. The man, a forester, shuts the door of the cutlass loudly. He steps forward, eyes frightened, mouth set hard, grey, ready. He wears tattered black tennis shoes. His arms are laced with scar tissue.

“I wasn’t expecting you”

The light dims. The air thick quietus, and Robin sits at length. He drifts through her mind, not visualized, nor sub-vocalized, yet in blood, current, felt.

The curve of your cheek against... past mine... mined... devised line pressed into it... self... (here, for a moment, the wind resolved her thoughts utterly).

Often Robin writes on her skin, her surface. She writes what she had in mind been composing earlier. The motion of the pen, sharp blue ball-point pressed into wrist, is acutely pleasurable. On her stoop, she is sitting upright, writing on her wrist. It is almost too dark to see. The ink. She utters, “Inklings lingering”.

Sue is eating a piece of wilted lettuce. Before she is finished with it, she begins to walk toward the glass. The dirt is warm and fine against her feet. There is a daisy on the other side. Sue would like to put the thin sheer petals in her mouth. She would like to understand them there, in that way. When she is close to the glass, she feels vaguely, primitives, a presence, an indistinction. When she reaches it, touches it with the tip of her nose— she pulls her head back into the utter darkness below the shell slung over her back, ponderous shield, ethereal temper, broad circumference hung on her shoulders like the moon. Within, a bright orb rebels against god. There is a faint recollection of wings, glorious splay and motion flaring from the darkness, bearing weight.

Every day Robin fetches Sue into her full hands, strokes the ripe curves of her shell, touches the top of her head. Sue used to retract during these moments, but has become more comfortable with the routine. Sometimes Robin brings sue to the level of her eyes, and they peer outward toward each other and Sue feels again the faint translucencies gleaming on surface, first in one eye, and then the other. One could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw, and this thing, this vaulted, pregnant curve, was her eye.

Robin lays her head on Will’s lap. She thinks, there is something between us... and I... She closes her eyes and stares further and further into distance. Will looks down and holds his breath for a moment. In the corner or the room, Sue has retired into the structure of her body. The sun sets. A flood of... not quite silence, and Will feels his heart pound in chest, throat, temples. He doesn’t mind much, yet he breathes slowly, deeply in order to
slow the swollen pulse.

A small rock in the middle of a highway is whipped up by the tire of a passing vehicle and leaves a small divot of fragmentation in a spotlessly clear windshield. A child staring listlessly out the window is startled by the noise, followed by a father’s silent curse. The child stares at the divot and imagines the force and determinism of air blowing against the glass, sheer and bright. Over a long, stretching moment the crack will be brought to life, snaking this way and that. Sometimes it will branch into two and move on. It will be a tangled labyrinth. It will be a blooming abstraction of it’s own being and memory. In the child’s eye the interwoven paths are like the crevices of old age. The child imagines shattering.

Robin is staring at a photograph of lightning. She does not believe in coherence of perception. There is an animal, emerging from its shell on the other side of the edge of her vision. Her name is Sue. The room smells faintly of Sue. The lightning is above the month of June, little square blocks of time smeared neatly over the glossy page.

There are bottles of all sizes, some brand new, some with sun-bleached labels, and some with none, their surfaces worn smooth and matte by years of dust. Dust-years. The child finds one of the older ones, grasps it, pours the dirt out of it, rubs it off with his fingers, throws it high into the air and listens as it thuds against the ground, thud of failure. The youth runs to it, picks it up, and hurls it against a discarded door, grey and splintering, listening carefully as it pops open and all the pieces tinkle as they fall over each other, raise dust. At the moment of impact a single fracture encompasses the entire form of the vessel, and then it shatters as if something inside had been waiting to burst out of it, waiting for that moment of freedom after ages of being weathered and buried.

Robin is looking in the mirror. She is not smiling, not quite frowning, corners fading into the liminal, reminiscent somehow, of night crawlers. Robin has a friend who could look you in the face and make her pupils contract and dilate at will, a neat trick that seems to important too be only that related to this and that also to this. So hollow, hollow sockets. Robin enunciates the word “socket”. Sharp corners, wet and flesh-red. Concentric circles, white, seagrey, black. A crack winds and branches out from the corner mirroring the veins in her eyes. Black labyrinthine passages through the substrate and the coat of reflective metal. “melted sand and metal you are”, says Robin, long pauses between the words.

Staring at the horizon, Will stands outside the back door of the restaurant where he waits tables. He swallows from his cup of black coffee then takes a long drag from his cigarette. He lets the pressure build up in his lungs until he can feel it pushing outward. He feels like bursting open, but does not remember the shattered clarity he wants. He is a crack locked within sheer discernment, snaking around the faint reflections and distorting.

There is a small table by the bed. There is a pen, a small notebook, a lamp, a glass of water, a necklace. The necklace is a chain laced through a crescent moon. The moon is delicate, slender, and Will imagines it in the little hollow, the concavity underneath Robin’s throat, between her protruding collar-bones. He notices, focusing his eyes, that there is a curved, epicene figure embedded, reclining, cradled in the moon.

Will leans his head back. His mouth emits a ring of smoke, curling about the sky. He blinks, looks down at his coffee. He swallows the last of it, throws his unfinished cigarette, smoldering scepter, into the street, and walks back inside.

“It’s a leaner chard, not too oaky, subtle undertones of plum.” He displays the bottle, label outward, to the first table of the night.

“Fine” Says the customer, turning back.

Will takes a wine key out of his pocket and uncorks the bottle, savoring the sound it makes as it is drawn out. He pours the wine, sets the bottle on the table, and walks away.

Robin wakes, stands. Will stands. Robin pulls back the covers of her bed, listens to the rustle, undresses, slips under. Will sits back into the desk chair to watch Robin fall asleep. His heart thuds in his temples. He takes Sue out of her box of glass. He collects her, sets her in his lap, and waits for her to emerge. Sue emerges. She senses, with the tip of her nose, the warmth radiating from Will’s thigh. Will, with the tip of his finger, touches the top of Sue’s head. She allows this.
The old woman is named Joan. Mostly she sits and plays with old, faded recollections. So much is sealed away in the unfathomable places. In access. She prods around inside herself. Charles, she thinks. . . . Lilly.

Robin opens her eyes and feels suspended in the dim light above herself. She lingers there, in that warm, forgetful space, dreading the cataract of awareness, place and body. It flows up past the back of her throat into her sinuses and head. She is in the basement of the campus library, tucked between shelves, overlooked. Rolling onto her back she feels warmth escaping her, and listens hard to the hum in the depths of the building, the hushed, resonant anxiety, a receding dream. Her neck hurts. She pushes herself up, hugs her knees, smells books, stale breath. She enjoys not knowing whether it is morning. She tucks The Call of the Wild in to her bag.

Will is walking down Joan’s hallway on his way back to the garage. She stops him, offers him leftovers. Her voice is woven from rasping leaves. Will accepts. When he is finished eating he watches Joan across the table, sleeping. In her open mouth, a blackness. Will enjoys watching her sleep.

He is pushing too hard. “Gently”, she whispers, but he fails to hear because he is afraid he will come. She bites his left earlobe, hard. Trembling with anxiety, he thinks of Walt Disney’s Bambi and finishes and falls limply onto her, into her. She scratches his back, whispers “...okay”, the phrase catching in the back of her mouth. Drunk, she feels she is swimming, forced into the sand by a wave, opening her eyes to the sting of salt water, staring at the surface of the ocean, allowing herself to float upward.

Reluctantly, Robin climbs up out of the library, into the slush of winter, drags the back of her hand over her eyes. The air is pallid, cold, thoughtless. Listening to it blow into her ear, she feels, with her eyes, the bareness of trees.

Will leaves the bar, bends down the street into his long walk. The wind is breathing. Hands in his pocket, shoulders hunched as if he could disappear into his smoke. He knows his loneliness will rise and surge and climax about halfway home.

Achilles, crouched in the darkness before battle, pushes into the bare ground with heavy blood pulsing into his fingers, and reasons with eternity. With the same ancestral passion Sue slows down the impression of her mind, blood un-quickening. The sun stretches the shadows of bare branches into the room and sue watches them glide across the dirt with a rush of excitement. This rush eventually crests and plashes into an obscure loneliness lacking object of loss. Sue cleaves to the moment of transition, searches desperately for the moment when the one becomes the other in order to practice the extension of moment, to rest in some dark extension of order between the spirit and the flesh.

Joan is pretending to sleep. She does not have to speak. She is not alone. Shattered, the crack is finally reaching the moment of unification it had been struggling with or for, neck of division always bent toward home unnamed.

Will is still standing in the mirror. Streaming from the corner of Robin’s left eye is the beginning of a long, slender tattoo. The tattoo slips down in the form of a stream, as if from a vale between mountains, me-and-ering, she thinks, then turning into a brook, slipping over the image of a sharp crag edge across the crest of her cheek then spilling over into a cataract plashing into the end of the tattoo, left dimple. The tattoo is not real. Often, Will retraces it with a black or blue ballpoint.

Robin is simpering. “Make it longer this time” and he elongates the drawing all the way down into the pool spilling over the lip of her deep button. An oval cave sheltering the little knot of flesh, of scar, into complete darkness.

Will's fingers run unnoticing over Sue's undershell, over red gloss, the unread words: Earth trembl'd from her entrails, and again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan

—ravenfox
my bed is a canvas
for me to fill—
all mine for colors
of pajamas and stuffed animals
like paintbrushes and charcoals
and the pastels of my pillowcases:
I am a master of my craft
like Picasso, limbs at
ridiculous angles, nose
flattened into face—
Monet, gracefully draped
over a dark expanse—
or Pollock (and this is when
I am thrown so hard into sleep
that I am more liquid than human,
more paint than personality)—
but it is such a very big thing
to paint alone
and you
(while you have much to learn:
your brushstrokes were careless
and your hair got in my mouth)
used to help