

Soliloquy I

TREMBLING	STARS	GLAZED
IN	BLOOD	SHARDS
NOT	YET	BROKEN
WAS	IT	NOW
WE	DECIDED	TO
LEAVE	ABANDON	SURRENDER
THIS	HALYCON	BLISS
HOW	COULD	WE
KNOW	MORE	THAN
WHAT	THE	LIGHT
GIVES	JUST	AS
THE	BRIGHTEST	STARS
DIE	SO	SOON
THERE	IS	ALWAYS
MORE	TO	SAY

Letter

I am addressing this to *you*

because I have no better method of elocution—

when I write your name in my palm the stigmata burns cold in my hand

as if trying to confess what is already known.

I'd prefer to call you by a different name,

a different epithet.

a synonym for *ruin*.

However, your name is

yours, there is no other

sound for that which you are.

The *you* I am addressing is not you

yet it must suffice.

precisely —it could never be,

For instance, when I draw you on the margins of books,

the closest I can get to your face is

water stains on a car window,

or a neat pile of leaves at the threshold of a kitchen door,

or a sudden scream in a therapist's office,

or a cracking voice singing in a car, homebound,

after a long day of picking out couches for the

living room.

I had to leave.

There are no words left inside of me to harvest:

Beautiful poem,

beautiful woman,

birdsong, not enough.

So many ropes have untied from my neck, and in my breath

of relief I didn't speak your name.

These fates were carved into our bones,

and all the vows

are ashes now on a barstool.

How did we ever trick ourselves into pretending

this was a kind of altar?

This Night & Others

Tonight, as my eyes grow heavy,
I have decided to leave the candle burning.
The way you and I did
over the course of nights
that, if stretched out over a field,
could hold the world like a mother.

The wax inside the glass cylinder,
at first firm and cold,
slowly pools as rain
does in a trough.

If I were to press my finger
inside the pink sap of the cherry
blossom wax, in what way
could I remember you?
As the sharp burning that leaves
as quick as it comes or
as the blanket of hardened plasma
that forms with time?

However it came, it arrived;

the crackling of the wicks
ceased and morphed into the slow
waltz of a blaze we would use
to lull ourselves to sleep.

Except for tonight there is no rest.
Only the dry vibration of flames
praying up towards the ceiling
for something to cling onto; their hunger
permeating this room I inhabit alone.
In the morning, the smell of burning
wakes me from a dream
in which I have spoken to you
through a confessional's partition.
I could not see your face, but could feel
your warmth lurching at me
through the perforated wooden slab.

You recalled to me a day
we spent on the side of a river,
laid out on a stone peninsula
fish swimming under and around us
& you reminded me of how quickly time
passed, of how we went walking
over the exposed tree roots
that bled into the water and how we tried
to etch our names into a boulder
but the fresh rain negated
this chance at eternity.

Speaking through the partition,
you tell me we should have taken this as fate.

Getting up from bed, I cross the room
to observe the candle.
The wax has hardened again
and the wicks are black and bulbous.
I remember how one night
when we were in bed, the wicks
extinguished themselves
one by one by one.
How we counted down the seconds
until the room was a shadow of itself,
how we grew aroused at the smell of their smoke;
how obvious all of it seems now.

I Have More Time Now

More time
to mine
sapphire
out of your eyes
More time
to fill my hourglass
with mud.

Every moment
that leaves me:
a nail loosened
from my flesh
an absence

which only opens the wound wider.

Nightmare

My daughter's grandfather
came to me in a dream
last night and asked
how are you?
It's been years
since I last saw him,
hours before he died.
Terrified at answering
the question, terrified
like a child scorned
for throwing their mess
into the closet and calling
their room clean, terrified
at how fast time passes, terrified
about having to tell him how
I cheated on his daughter with
a woman who I'd marry
and divorce in the same year,
or that I can't sleep at night
without plucking a feather
from a kestrel and placing it
under my tongue or that I don't
kiss his grandchild every morning
before she walks further and further
into herself.

Of all the people
we can only see in dreams.
Of all the nightmares
one can have.

Birds in the Light of Morning

Out on the porch this morning
a flock of birds ask me where I've been.
I don't know how to tell them,
for what do birds know of loss,
but if I could tell them
how I followed you,
as you leapt into the air,
as dust does when the door opens,
to where would I say you've gone?
But they see through me.
One claims they saw you
on the street, entangled in someone else—
(like a vulture picking clean a deer's corpse)
I point them to the sun now rising
and they vault into the sky as you did,
headed towards an undefined horizon, firmament
found only in the eyes
of someone else.

Translation of a Note Found on a Bus in Mexico City

As you rise from your seat and prepare to leave,
in a river. You make your way to the front
in hopes of making you turn around but
I fall asleep tonight I promise to confine
I will write my elegy on the cracks of my teeth,
your face in the pews of every church.

you glance at me & time is reduced to puddles
of the bus, I think of saying my mother's name
in my mouth a bird pirouettes on my throat. Before
myself inside symbols no one will ever read:
beg for the debris of your hair. I will carve

Arcadian Desire

I am thinking of two lovers
in the hills
of a forest in which they
plan to spend the evening.

Their skin wet with dew
and yearning, pulled
as if by string towards
the moon: I have seen this
before—another life,
photographs
on my mother's windowsill.

I imagine the language of trees
filling their mouths, & moss
weaving into their hair, & owls
crooning in their retinas—all proof
that true desire knows its source. Though

I wish
I could tell them the blanket
they brought will not keep them warm,
that the food they didn't finish
will attract bears, or that they may
never leave the memories
of this place behind,
no matter what rituals they employ—
but they wouldn't listen &
why would they?

With the night sky
charged and smoldering,
as his hand falls down her stomach
& her teeth clench across his chest,
who would deny themselves any
of this?

A new day

arrived on the shadow
of the one
that came before

& we marked each night's passing
by the slow chorus of grackles
chirping in the oaks outside our window.

With no names for the mornings
that came and went, we stumbled
into our waking slumber.

I want to pry open those moments—
pull them apart and extract
any proof, any sign that you were real;
that the side of your face
once called my chest *home*.
But instead,

I have taken these memories
and placed them in the mouths
of other women, the way a librarian
places worn-down books
on the bottom shelves.

Still,
I see you in the wrinkles of blankets and bedsheets.
Still,
the winter rain finds its way under the front door.

After

In the black morning
the convenience store sign
burns white neon & is a moon
whose light I trace
along the ripples
of the lake where I first placed
my trembling hand between your legs
the autumn wind & my face in your hair

nothing was uncertain
we discovered more about
flesh that could fill the pages
of a book written on the waves
of an ocean
and now
there are days
where church bells are the only
way I can remember my name

and what if there was no lake
was no moon
was no morning
was no light
was no sign
and my hands
were as steady
as orchids in snow

what if it was just you and all my ghosts
how would I even breathe

Soliloquy II

YOU	QUIETLY	PLAY
HIDE	N	SEEK
WITH	YOUR	FATHER'S
CORPSE	AND	HE
NEVER	FINDS	YOU
YOU	WHO	HIDES
BEHIND	PLASTIC	TREES
YOU	WHO	COLLAPSES
LIKE	PAPER	UNDER
WINTER'S	MELTED	SNOW
YOU	WHO IS	ME
WRITING	THIS	POEM
WHILE	YOUR	FATHER'S
CORPSE	SAYS	COME
OUT	I GIVE	UP.

Gallery For the Newly Damned

1

Staring at the dead snake
on the sidewalk—intestines
fireworks in a gray fog, I realize
I am the same age as Apollinaire
when he died, choking
on his own lungs.

2

My bride bit an apple in March—
decided to walk into a forest.
Foraging for insects
and dead things to douse
her hunger; she came back
one morning during August,
through a door
crawling on all four legs.

3

I would like to give my father
the morning light in a glass
jar—painted black to reflect
nothing back to him.
But what I have are the ashes
of a clock I set on fire
to move through an empty cave.

4

There are holes in the canoe. Measure
your lungs in smoke. Rectify my burning
as your forgiveness. I have tried
to rationalize everything: we are only
so much.

Prayer to the Unseen

Bewitch me—hold
my eager mouth
to your nipple.

Tie the river
twice
around my wrists.

Move through me
as fire
moves through trees.

Create from these
wounds, spectacular
scars.

Neglect me, forsake
me—my skin
weaved into yours.

Teach me to
draw
the shadows
of smoke.

Riverwater

As a child I learned
there are things better left unsaid.
Silence can be a weapon,
a method for tempering what you
want the most.

When we were kids my sister,
running from my outstretched
hand, fell and split her head
open on the brick fireplace.
Blood ran down her skull,
riverwater over limestone.

I remember the way my mother
held her, bloodied and howling,
and all I want now is to fall
headfirst onto whatever surface
could grant me this same kind
of love.

How to hide these desires
you hold so close? Never
let them leave your lips.

Elegy

We hear now the bone rattle
of hardened flesh & polished oak.

And we begin as all lost journeys do—back turned
against a sea, towards the unknown home
by the dirt kicking up at the back of our ankles.
both bound & unbound

A lilac, on the side of the road, in bloom, swallows itself

& we amble over a bridge where two lovers
are weaved into each other;

they heave lifeless numb as if by this they

measure time:

good morning, night—goodnight, day.

Past the bridge, walking further, the flora

is luminous vibrating decay

orbs of tiny grandeur.

In this new land
of forgotten horizons,

you cannot remember
your mother's name
or your father's face.

You know you should
feel saddened by this, but the neon

gleam
of the oak trees
hold you closer
than they ever could.

Lists

This morning
I forgot the date
on which I found your
body—foam running
down your chin as if trying
to return to an ocean.

I sat in my car
outside of the job
I swore to never get,
eyes closed and furious
for all that time
has stolen from me.

Trying
to remember,
all that appeared
was a series of lists:

bills, to-do's, grocery,
my daughter's wish-list for Santa.

If only I had made
a list of that day, perhaps
I could remember it now:

the dogs barking at the closed door
the smell of rotten cabbage on my tongue
your eyes deep like the lake we'd swim in
your face the color of my mother's couch.

For a moment, the air in my car
felt divided
as if we were sharing it again.

Requiem for Future Suffering

It took sixty-five years for my father to realize he would die alone. He confessed this to me after forgetting who I was. He began to tell me about a dream in which he was watching himself sleep in the middle of a field of tall grass and how the echoes of wind filling the spaces between blades caused the view of himself to gradually fade, until there was nothing but the imprint of his body outlined in grass on the hard earth; he awoke from the dream covered in piss. I began to tell him how dogs, as they begin to die, will isolate themselves from their owners and begin to sleep more, in places they never did. In the negative space of our conversation, he falls asleep on the couch in his one-bedroom apartment. There is no stranger feeling than watching your father sleep—inoculated against the misconception that we can ever be alone, mouth agape in wonder.

Lorca's Palm Leaves

I traded
a handful
of weed
with a man
begging
on the street
for a palm cross
that looked
like Lorca

though a heart
not Jesus
was nailed
to the cross
and a rose
not blood
centered
this symbol
of surrender

yet still
I thought
of Jesus
as he walked
into Jerusalem
the palm leaves
under his feet
yet still
I thought
of Lorca
crucified
on a hillside
his heart
made of leaves
tossed
into the wind

and now
the man
finding shade
under a tree

weaves my sins
in exchange
for something
that will only
amplify
the hunger

In Search of Venusian Oceans

It takes thousands of years
of rainfall to produce an ocean.

Which makes me think of all
the lifetimes found in a wave

which makes me feel closer
to my own reckoning.

I imagine the places
my consciousness could end up:

a grove of orange trees
a stone beneath a waterfall—
but how often do we end
where we began.

There was once a time
when we believed oceans

adorned the planet Venus,
but science

as with all our greatest stories,
has corrupted this too.

How I could reawaken there
surrounded by ancient rains,

how I could walk head down
against the waves in one direction

and always end up somewhere else.