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I.

*A Strawberry Plant is a Beautiful Thing*

I can see the paint cracking away from the base of the house, revealing the red happy place it used to be. It surrounds the house, curling away from distant memories. Pulling itself away with time, falling apart more and more at every harsh breeze.

We used to have a strawberry plant. It hung on a thick wood beam where the paint hadn't cracked yet, just under the awning. Every day I would push out the thin wood door holding the fresh air out and let it clack uselessly against the house. I would walk back in sweeter and happier than I had been, letting the strawberry crowns return to the Earth in my path. They were small, additive, *ours*. Windchimes live there now, cold, hollow, and beautiful.

I walk along the treaded path to reach it. Following the weeds grown through concrete slabs, the wilting dandelions swaying in tandem with my toes. All from the porch with wicked wood and splintered grain, that is formidably rebuilt every summer with a fresh coat of paint. It did not get paint this year.

I step over grounds for suspicion, where shoes have not stepped in many years. I make my way through flower pots, both ceramic and plastic, but the dead lilies do not know the difference. I can remember it being beautiful, filled. Where the marigolds used to live every year, near where I used to sit and watch them get watered and cared for. Where I watched them thrive. They were not alive this year.

I pass the garden, sparing a forlorn glance to the patch of knotted grass that takes the place of once gracefully tall plants. I stutter my step to mourn the tomatoes, mint leaves, and simple joys. The arched fence containing the garden has caved inwards. There's a wooden wheelbarrow decaying to the left of my scratched path, just beyond live the crab apple trees. They at least have stayed the same in their sharp tangled ways.

I have to look towards the bend in the fence that we would hop, too eager to walk the final corner to our front door. That feeling dulled as did the sweetness of the sweet pea vines now intertwined with the chicken-wire fence. I haven't tasted one in years.

I move through the grass, ignoring the way overgrown strands claw at my ankles. I climb over childhood memories, an old plastic slide where the dirt has sifted through, just sturdy enough that I only feel the first step move under my feet. In three moments, I am above my problems. My burdens, heartache, and shadows all fall away.

My feet stick soundly to the rough asphalt shingles. The air feels clear off the ground, good and right, where not even sounds of arguments, trains, and cars can reach my ears. The wind feels soft, tickling the hairs on my arms, surrounding me in a comfort I have not known in recent memory. I come here sometimes, to the top of the shed.

I listen to the soft music luminating from the dull speakers of my phone, lean back on the shallow incline of the roof. I don't let my feet hang over when my eyes are closed. I squint, toes poking incessantly into the air, and look at the pretty colors that drift across the sky.

I take deep breaths with the clouds, appreciate how the branches of the spruce tree curl in the air. I let the cold air and possibility lull me awake.

Twenty feet away was where I lived and hated, loved and cried. I sit on the roof of a shed with no intention to move at all.

When I walk back to the door, I keep my eyes on the ground, trying to prolong the calm I have taken from the night. I walk over the splintered wood, pass the windchimes, and let the door clack against the house.

II.

*A Modest Understanding*

I often find myself wondering what I would look like inside-out.  
Since even modest vulnerability scares me,  
I didn't think I should be allowed.

Though I still hold up a mirror in modest light,  
and look into the eyes of the beholder.

To understand the world means  
to understand why it was created.

For who it was created.

For why.

For who.

For why.

An endless discussion with no significant answer.

I often find myself wondering who I would be without my thoughts.  
If I would float away, or be nothing at all.  
To think so insignificantly,  
I don't think I should be allowed.

### III.

#### *The Other Summer Day*

Tell me, isn't it too soon to decide which flower smells the best, what clothes to use to dress, what to do with life's eternal mess?

Tell me, shouldn't we wait for the calling in our ears to finally emerge, and until that time, isn't it best to idle in a field where one can feel at peace before breaking pace.

Who decides when something is insignificant? Doesn't the absence of speed feel just as nice?

And what if we spend our time in deliberations? Does an answer feel just as nice? Would our heads calm in completeness? Would our bodies cease to hurt?

Never has a question been left so unanswered, but in a field, with daisies, lilacs, and light breeze, no answer felt quite as nice.

### IV.

#### *Drowsy Fields*

I sat on the curb for a while, letting faces pass,  
stopped by a coffee shop, spelled out my names for them.

I detailed my hair in windows, let vanity follow the smoke,  
Glided along the pavement, didn't idle in any store.

I had been doing this for ages, drifting like a ghost,  
letting winds move my legs and arms, past valleys, creeks, and homes.

I made it to a field one drowsy afternoon, hadn't meant to stray.  
I let the flowers hold me, and promised to never leave.

When the seasons change, I mourn their wilting leaves,  
return to the storefronts, and visit them in the mirrors.

V.

*The First Morning*

It was the first morning, as every moment is the first morning.  
It is a slow light, caressing a speckled ceiling through sheer curtain.  
When eyes open and minds rest, it's the first morning again.

It is a soft light, just three times surer after the first thought peeks its way into the air.  
It is clear, though that can be swiftly disregarded.  
As we are warm, before cold even knew our arms, legs,  
or toes.

As we are right, before arguments held our names.  
It is easy, to sprawl legs along the floor, stepping over past days.  
It is easy to make our way along the treaded path to a sure routine.

It is nice even, at the first sip of the day, to let the dry promise of tomorrow tickle, and eventually be soothed.

It is the first morning, as every moment is the first morning, to let ourselves be soothed again.

VI.

*Simple Things*

Biscuits from the oven, new mugs and tea.  
Regardless of size, these are not simple things.

Conditional hugs, soft shirts, and things to see,  
the whole sky breathing for the sake of continuing.  
Regardless of lasting, these are not simple things.

Lavender ice cream in abundance, carefully lined brick,  
words said with confidence, and what scuffed shoes represent, hours in book shops, the used ones with stacks,  
the familiar sound of the screen door's sharp clack.

The same coffee order graces your tongue,  
they remember your name for the Wednesdays you come

A pile of sweaters dressing your chair, the promise that  
wherever you've gone, they'll always be there.

Rough looking hats hang on their hooks,  
wearing one for a lifetime ignoring the holes.

It's knowing, being known, a simple affair,  
remembering the good things that led us right here.

VII.

*Brick by Brick*

What, if in the gospel of doubt,  
do we do when stained glass crumbles under our gaze?

What if the centuries old mosques decided to crack,  
tired of being stared at?

Just like that we would be on the ground.

What would happen to our foundation if we  
took it brick by brick and decided if each one sparked joy?

What would we do when we ran out of bricks to throw.

We could build a little house.  
One of stone and mud and shattered glass.  
And each year we would take it down just the same.

Find a new spot to perch and build and breathe.

When it would start to crumble, our questions a too load bearing weight,  
we tear it down, start again, and build it brick by brick.

VIII.

*Sitting, One Day in July*

It is time to think about the day after,  
or the day before,  
I said, sitting, one day in July.

Jumping ponds in a month,  
I am too busy to discuss.

Everything has jumbled itself  
into one monotonous day.  
One very long day.

A day which has seen the likes  
of a thousand suns, and  
watched as the moon  
danced in the sky.

A day which saw  
birth and passing before  
the taking of a toast and tea.

As we joined at the table,  
I saw pyramids fall  
too quickly,  
their crashing dust  
promptly swept.

Our one monotonous  
day sped on, and I waited  
for July to end.

IX.

*Chasing the Night*

Tell me, how do I chase the night?

I have waited at the top of the hill for minutes to last a lifetime,  
Sitting still on the plastic bench just past the horizon,  
and I ponder the question under my feet.

One in each harsh exhale, one in the impatient  
tap of my fingertips.

I think through the sunrise, the fall,  
and return to my bench each comforting afternoon.

I asked the blanket of space to smother the sun,  
and decided to wait. I asked it to stay on the other  
side of the world for a few more breaths of precious calm  
and decided to wait.

I would run around the Earth,  
bury myself underground,  
but I sit unsure.

No one would tell me how to chase the night.

On my bench, in the weighted dark,  
I close my eyes and never stop.

X.

*Sprigs of Potpourri*

The bright blue room smelled like potpourri,  
the blue fog carried the air.

I asked the beings, one by one,  
Have you dreamt in this spot before?

I twisted my fingers in the sprigs at my hips,  
and held on as the world turned around.

I knew in the purposeful creases, the sprigs had been held  
by many hands besides my own.

The blue fog carried the air, the past,  
and the dry promise of waking up.

XI.

*All Strings Attached*

We are infinite spools of yarn,  
attaching ourselves to everything we touch

Tying simple bows or hard knots,  
spending our time anchoring ourselves  
to the most important things

Hoping one day we can follow the line back,  
and find the other end when we miss it,  
feel a tug when it misses us

We could travel overseas, across states,  
watch the strands crease around corners,  
in planes, all of them collecting under the lip of the door

We tie them to people, just around their pinkies,  
tie promise rings, friendship bracelets,  
crochet love like it's our only expression

Tie a string to the top of a sapling,  
watch it poke into the sky patiently,  
and pull our connection with it

Eventually the other end of the string  
will be cut somewhere along the line,  
but we are infinite spools, so we carry  
the frayed ends behind us,  
an infinite weight and comfort

XII.

*The Sister Swing*

It's warm there, even at 30 degrees,  
for beanies and wide grins are all that we need

And its soft there, easily on plastic and metal,  
sure voices, hard missings, and pictures to see

Just as we aged, as if no time had passed,  
it was the same at this point that no moment lasts

We'd get cold drinks, pink drinks, anything to stay,  
look to the door when a swift breeze rolls in

It's stable in the way that a swinging thing is,  
walking on ice, ears donning sharp pins

We'd say soulmates, heartache, tarot and tea,  
stand up to fall down avoiding wet seats

It's fine to freeze, we thought, sitting for hours,  
soon light would be the element out of our power

We'd stand on our legs, swinging in peace,  
forget for a moment that time was a tease

It's cold, but more numb when he is not there,  
the whole of it all, was of course built to be shared

XIII.

*Milkshake*

Feel like you've never felt,  
feel harder than you ever have,  
look at the Earth through a straw  
and challenge it to stay at the other end.

XIV.

*Remember Me*

I thought the Earth would remember me,  
caress me in her palm of sweet moss,  
hold me close in her underbrush,  
have clouds carry me out.

I thought she would whisper my name through the wind,  
gently hold my hand,  
tuck hair behind my ear with her branches,  
and put a dandelion there.

I thought the Earth would remember me,  
after all that we had shared.  
After the secrets I whispered to the night,  
and the hours blankly staring.  
After I had tripped, and she waited patiently  
as I stood in her roots,  
I thought she might recall  
the way I spoke to the ground,  
and say back in similar tone,  
*I remember you*

XV.

*Faint Marks*

In faint marks, is there solidity?  
Fading rock and tempered grain.

Does the urge to be remembered overcome you?  
Just as corpses turn to earth and mulch again.

XVI.

Of trees and cliff face  
Clean air and breathless feeling  
Would falling be sweet?

I was everyone  
With backwards and forwards face  
Reformed everyday

XVII.

*Everywhere*

I am years ago, and here.  
And there. Everywhere.  
All of the time.

XVIII.

*For Hours Gone*

Another hour gone,  
I've been staring  
at the ceiling.

The cracks,  
pulling away from each other,  
the popcorn texture  
dancing idly.

I laid like that,  
a stone on my forehead,  
legs up along the panel,  
to forget I had a body,  
or a name.

The other day even,  
I tried to disappear.  
I held my breath,  
til my lungs collapsed,  
closed my eyes  
so they couldn't see.

The day after,  
I had a headache:  
Soothed with  
tea in gentle waves.

I stared into  
the darkening lake,  
and dramatically swirled  
it to sleep.  
I thought about  
the ceiling then.  
The low caged  
line, speckled  
stars that I stuck  
on and the pressing  
weight of the sky.

For hours gone,  
My legs went up,  
and I became the  
cracks in the wall.

XIX.

*Ants to the Moon*

We are small. Ants to the moon,  
insignificant like dust in the air  
of the cosmic good.

Suppose still that she looks  
down on us. Suppose that  
she spends her days appreciating  
our disorder under a magnifying glass.

Like her own creation, she watches  
as we draw in sand with sticks, and  
let the water carry away our work  
in the next hour.

Let us also suppose that she loves us,  
the way we follow rivers like a lead,  
climb trees like an omen, and forget ourselves  
in the wind.

She loves us for our absurdity,  
our uniqueness from each, other speck  
like a pointillism portrait, each dot  
important to the full picture.

She hangs it on her fridge with reverence,  
pride exuding along with cautious watchfulness.

Suppose that she loves us still,  
takes count of our accomplishments  
in the deep palm of her hand.

Takes count of loaves of bread,  
adventures to the sister swings,  
freckles positioned on arms.

Takes count of the acceptance letters,  
the rejections too, counts cold brews  
and gumption, fears of height and  
jumps off cliffs.

Suppose that she counts the ants,  
takes count of each leaf they shoulder,  
each line, each weight, each crooked antenna,  
every single one, all of the time.

XX.

*Parking Lots*

I sat with her in parking lots,  
    watchful eyes a comforting weight.  
The angle of the roof made her  
    impossible to see.  
I fumbled for a secret to split,  
    and held it out the rolled down window into the night.  
Cold hands took it all. Gently surrounded,  
    the blanket of dark guarded us.  
Through miles, our whispers echoed,  
    Chilled touches on my cheekbones.  
I breathed in the serenity,  
    and its crisp promise.  
I sat then and drove away quietly,  
    a deep fog following me home.