

Statement

When I first started writing poetry, I always found myself writing my way back to my origins, to my childhood, and to all the things that shaped me into the person I am today. So I figured, if I was going to end up back at the start, why not take you along for the ride? This collection captures many of the things of my childhood that made it what it was. To write provides a way for communities to connect and come together, for people to understand each other for who they truly are. I want others to know that it's okay to be afraid of all your history, but that to keep moving forward means to learn from it too. Through poetry, I want others to know they're not alone, to know that somewhere out there in this sometimes crazy world, there will always be a way to find yourself again. Lose yourself in words, but remember that sometimes to be brave is to just start.

Missing Steps

She dances with her heart

In her hands,

Follows her (heart)beat.

One day she'll miss a step

So when she does

Why not miss two?

(imagine!)

She's nothing but praying for miracles here,

Everything but that rep-etition (utation).

Remember, she's born of a garden of dust

So the way (red)wood roots soak in the morning rain,

That's her.

Her legs swing over the edge of twilight, Saturn's rings and the gray of Mercury.

She climbs to the bottom of empty wells.

She sits there for a while.

They'll call her crazy.

They'll never hear her music.

She dances with her heart

In her hands

Follows her heart(beat).

A Portrait of Motherland

Sometimes I can almost feel

Thanaka against my skin.

I can almost feel warm rainfall, tangerine flesh

Dipping under fingers. Bare feet kicking at soft,

Breathing soil and crawling roots under quagmire.

I can almost feel fresh ginseng in my throat,

Like I'm spitting out the syllables of it.

Words made of spilled ink fly off the page like cicadas,

Heavy pockets, burning with moth-light. There's mohinga

Heavy on my tongue, incense that comes with a prayer and it

Whittles itself into something bronze & beautiful.

Something like unpaved roads, the creased pages of worn piano sheets

It's in the folds of longyi, sweeping against ankles and dirt.

I can almost feel the movements of it, dancing and patient,

Like the quiet determination of the Burmese python dashing into the glowing sky,

The clash of wind chimes and

The smell of a moonlight symphony through generations.

Myanmar, I can almost feel you.

Life as it was, Life as it is

I grew up a few blocks away from the plaza.
This house with all of its neon pink walls,
Smother them with cream paint
And dance around the living room
Like it's home
Because it is.

Sunlight kissing my forehead when I sleep in too late
The smell of wild dandelions on the front lawn, in the backyard
Butterflies disappearing in the smear of green, only to reemerge when
Wandering fingers wade through daisies and I'm
Swallowing mouthfuls of the blue, blue sky
The taste of it sweet on my tongue, forbidden but never muted
Shirt clinging to warm skin, chalk on sidewalk,
The dust of it on palms and fingers
Count the days on glossy calendar pages, and

Growing up, don't have to stand on my toes to see my reflection in the mirror
That's when
I used to run home in the dark, in the rain
Find comfort in old movies after tests failed, but stronger, faster, getting a little better every day
Failing sometimes,
Falling too, bruises like berries exploding under skin
But we rub them away with the promise of tomorrow and we try again. We try every day.

And now, the paint is
chipping in this house, the pink is showing by the stairway,
I'm moving and I've got to keep growing up now,
a fifteen minute drive away from the plaza,
Life as it was.

Of course, there's always life as it is.

The Five Stages of Grief and How to Lose the Stars

i. denial

Doctor says you're sick
But he's wrong, go to sleep,
Okay? When you wake up I
Know you'll feel better, just
Wake up soon because you're sleeping
Through the P.M. and you can't forget
We've got to go to those flower fields
You were talking about. Stars are gold
And so is your heart. Your heart is gold,
That's why it's so heavy all the time.
But I'm not worried. I just need you to stay
Awake a little longer because everyone keeps talking like you're
Gonna be gone. I wanted to laugh but I need you to laugh
With me so I can make sure.

ii. anger

You didn't wake up, so what do you
Want me to say to that? Your door is closed,
I can't hear your footsteps behind it. And I showed up to your
Funeral too. And I put a pink rose on your coffin because pink is your favorite color and
Flowers are your favorite things. But you still didn't wake up so I threw out
Some of your old clothes. Visited those flower fields myself because for you there
Were never enough flowers. Now I can't sleep because I'm still waiting
For you. I hope you know that.

iii. bargaining

I'm sorry. The library sent me an overdue bill
For that book on your nightstand so I
Picked it up and your bookmark fell out because
You never finished it. So I read the ending for you.
And I'm not going to tell you what happens because you need to come back first.
If infinity is just a concept, let me meet you on the flip side -
All I do now is make wishes on passing cars that
You'll come back
Or take me with you.

iv. depression

Last night I thought you might be home so I ran
Because if flying is falling
Then I'm flying like I know how
I was flying past the streetlights, untied shoelaces clicking against pavement
And I couldn't stop thinking about how you would've tied them for me.

The snow soaked my socks and I tripped over dandelions.

I wasn't fast enough, I couldn't get there in time.
When I got home, stumbling through the doorway,
my hands cut from knees buckling on rough ground,
You were gone. And that's when I knew
you were dead.
Because you would've never left me like this if you could stop it.
The stars never seemed so dark. They can't be gold
Without your golden heart. They can't be gold because you're
Gone.

And I was thinking about the moon and how it pulls the tides,
And how the tides crash over the rocks.
I want you back, I want you back more than the tides.

If flying is falling
Then I'm falling like I know how.

v. acceptance

Visited that flower field, brought a picnic blanket
And sandwiches for two. Watched your ghost kick up daisies.
I remember you're gold
even though you're not here,
Because you're in every flower in this field. Guess we did come to the
Fields after all. It hurts to remember you
In the all the places you'll never be but I know
You're in the flowers, so together
We reach for the sun.

Searching for All the Lost Things

The buzz in ears, feeling only

Sand against toes, the roughness of it underneath nails, in eyes

Light a candle, feel the way lungs expand to the glow of flames, melting wax like smooth honey

Watch the way the sun sets in the evening, kissing the edge of the horizon

While you're at it, look for an escape, search the attic, slice through the packing tape

Of old cardboard boxes,

Because you might find it there but instead you

Find yourself in the fleeting years,

Shining eyes, the soft flesh underneath them dark with sleepless nights

Songs half-sung on lips, the curve of ribs above heart

That's your birthright so keep it safe, tuck it in the pocket of your pretty blue jeans or

In the locket of your flight, but be careful

Your head doesn't quite fit that bicycle helmet

If you fall you'll skin your knee and slam

against whitewashed fences,

against green grass.

Then, the buzz in ears. Feeling only ...