

The Expulsion

Limbs down, unripe apples spoiled across the lawn,
I wonder if I have angered some unseen entity.

Have I been dismissed from paradise?
Am I being punished for an offense I committed

unknowingly? Was I warned? Was I forbidden
but one thing? I planted these trees

under a susurrantion of starlings, under a vernal and vacuous sky.
I should be the one to make music for this garden,

adding birds and bugs to voice long afternoons of passion,
to celebrate morning exclamations of joy.

Night should come with its own song,
a shiver of wind under leaves, a shushing of rain on the roof.

But I have no control over the weather.
I have no say about serendipity,

the slapdash ways of the world, and gods.
There, I've said it. I've conceded to the almighties,

who delight in punishment, who take
pleasure from the suffering of others.

Perhaps it is just chance that broke these trees.
At least then I could refute supernatural control.

I could disregard swarms of unanswered prayers
buzzing around as though they were bees

and my ears were blossoms of hope,
whatever that may be.

Cruelty can be chalked up to coincidence,
which is not a god, but a fickle cousin to fate.

How do I make sense of this entropy?
How can I believe the branches I climb can hold me

when my body was built for an endless, ungraceful fall?

Hyperbole

By always, I mean intermittent
but ongoing. I mean the hours of sunlight
and minutes that walk through the night.

So when I say I drive through town every day,
you understand
this is not a constant.

Cracks in pavement widen, even
if only by perception. Rainwater fills gaps,
and wind dries the roadway.

Birds, maybe
wrens or finches, peck at sidewalks,
choose the right pebbles

to fulfill their lives. Black cats are everywhere,
but they don't always cross my path.
And when I say everywhere, I mean nothing

more than the fact that black cats are the ones
I notice, and they come
with their own superstitions.

Seasons come and go.
They are downtown employees
waiting for traffic to let up, the lights

to change, the concrete to push them
on their way. So I drive through town
every day. And when I say every day...

well, you know what I mean.
This is home. This is the pattern of wake
and sleep and work and play.

This is the same old sun and clouds and rain
listing god-like above us
since the beginning of time.

Resuscitation

I remember a white light.
Or rather warmth and light-headedness,
a dizzying height, a numbness
touching me as though I wasn't there.

I remember falling through clouds,

a feeling of flying, but lost.

Then you were kissing me,
touching my chest,
pressing down upon my heart.

A cat sitting upon a sleeping child
is said to be stealing breath.

I don't know what made me think of that,
unless there is nothing more at 5:03 in the afternoon
but a matter of escaping death,

or something like it.

There's a ringing in my ears.
I've been listening to cicadas
rehearse their songs on a midsummer night,

when changelings wander orchards and fields
looking for souls free from their bodies
to replace them in the living world.

I worry I am not myself.
Stand back.
Give me room.
Let me catch my breath.



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