

Sadie Cardenas

It Starts With A Light

It starts with a light.
It is both the light you see in the beginning and the light you see in the end.
The light that can be the sun
Or an operating room
The overwhelming brilliance of a world we don't know how to live in.
We come out backwards from the beginning
Our bodies are clay mannequins
With pieces that can be elongated and pinched and reshaped
To fit the needs of Time.
And when we are old enough to understand things and realize what it means to live,
We celebrate it.
For what better to do with all this time than learn
Experiencing day by day?

When we are young- say nine years old
We think time doesn't affect us.
We think of our minds and bodies as frozen
Because we cannot remember being any other way.
So we laugh and play
And dream of the day
When we finally get to grow up.

But then it happens.
And only then do you realize you've been tricked.

Blink, and a year is gone.
Blink, and six more follow.
Blink, and you're sixteen.

You don't feel any different.
You still look the same.
Soft-cheeked, soft-bellied, still dreaming.
These are the magic years, they say,
But the world is still as gray
And incomprehensible as it was
When you started living in it.
You're still trying to sort through this kaleidoscope of emotions inside
And you don't know what to do with yourself
But everyone else does:

"Start looking at colleges."

"Get a job."

"Learn to drive."

"Live your life."

"Open up."

And all you can do
Is wish you knew
How to follow their orders.

Time flies
Like the balloon from your birthday party that sails away and disappears into the clouds.
It slips into the shadows like a thief in the night
And all you want to do is catch Him
Shake him by the shoulders and scream *"What have you done to me?"*
But He will dissipate beneath your fingertips to steal from another victim
Because Time waits for no one.
"Start looking at colleges."
I'm still late for my high school classes.
"Get a job."
It's one step closer to leaving.
"Learn to drive."
I'm still trying to catch up on my feet.
"Live your life."
I can't leave the house without telling anyone.
"Open up."
Oh, give it a rest.

I have already been sliced wide open to let in everything,

Every storm and hurricane and earthquake.
I understand too little and feel too much
But it's better to guard it
Convince myself and others that I don't cry because I've grown up.
But for a moment I slip.
And because everyone else is so
Smart
And Intuitive
And Concerned for Me
They see it.
"Let it all out. It's okay."
They don't know about the wreckage inside.
They expect it all to be fully formed, tangible.
A beast with snarling teeth and red eyes with hellfire shining through
Something they can defeat.
They want to stick a Band-Aid over the crack
And think they've fixed it
And feel better knowing they understand you.

What they don't want is to watch you stammer
Watch you stop and start
And struggle to shape your sentences
Watch you clench your knuckles white
And hold back tears.
Because it's not just one monster.
It's a whole tempest
Howling, snapping, snatching you up in its whirlwind.
And it isn't something to be fought with a sword or spell.
One day you will learn to best it (So you hope)
Though you do not know when.
But you don't anyone else to know
Out of fear that they'll get swept away too.
So you lock it inside
And pray to a god you don't believe in
For the best.

I know, I know.
I haven't gone out in the world.
I haven't experienced true pain.
I haven't made a single dream of mine come true

But remember what it was like to be Me.
To have what feels like the world breathing down your back
Barking orders from every direction.
"Carpe diem, seize the day."
"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,"
How many times I have tried, you don't even know.
I ran into that garden without a second thought
And now my arms are bleeding
Because I can't stop scratching myself on the thorns.
And you tell me to calm down
But every day feels like I'm running out of Time.

Look at me again.
You don't see an accomplished writer.
You don't see a student ready to graduate.
You see nothing
But a child
With a sweet, wispy mind full of clouds
And every time I look in the mirror,
So do I.

I've branded myself with a purple heart of my own
I got it from beating myself up
Over things I can't control.
So please
Don't try to explain myself to me.
Don't tell me it's going to be alright.
Instead, try to understand
Put yourself in my shoes again, even though they don't fit the same.
And, if you can,
Give me a little more Time.

Gibbous

The bright side of the moon
That white rose petal suspended in the pitch dark of night, dripping stardew
Glowing, blooming, brilliant
The grin of your high school sweetheart
The spinning Ferris wheel, going round and round
The blissfully cloying taste of memories
Fondly recalled like film tapes in your past
The perfect example for a word that represents
Everything good in the world
And yet
It is not quite whole.

It doesn't need a trained eye to spot it
You could see it if you want to.
The drama behind the curtains
The sour aftertaste of something sweet
The thing you missed not because you did not notice it
But because you did not want to.
You chose to blot it out, keep your vision untainted
Instead of lingering
Because why ruin the moment?

Every light needs a shadow to exist
Everything is gibbous
Shining radiant in the sky above, but at the same time
Veiled.
Impaired.
Imperfect.
With the dark side of the moon peeking out, staring, daring you
To come look.