

Anthony Oag

remnants of a prayer

go down to that final place
spread the brambles
pick away the helicoptering leaves
move around the sullen
gates of coal mines
and boat docks darkened
by the after-slick of floods
in the slate bed of the creek mouth
you will find it there
as if a cloud of gnats were trying to cheat death
a space of air trembles
reaches for wings

dungeons of home

you are the succulent under the floorboards
 thrashing quiet fins against
the ceilings of basements
 where old pipes let loose
 the sulfur water of their hulls

I feel small ships as the growing pains stop,
at my full height finally gauging the fall, the flights
of stairs which now lead down instead of up.
 there are voyages taking place in these walls,

whole colonies of memory now caught
 in surge and storm. i make a home
in the mirage, each day learning
 that the floor isn't lava,

 that the home baked smell of a closet
is just the drifting of old truths,
past tension, uncoiled.

sideways barstoolin'

straight up
planted in the wall,
wall-ways of all things
 a dancer
is a hostage
thrilled upon chaining.
i'm not your stranger
 i am
a danger on the outside of
a vegas bomb threat
split like lava
 in the lamp.
gimme
the neon jean talk,
flag waving
 those legs
along the slow whinny of a twisting
room, turned around
the cog like a rainbow
 turtle, never out of hill to roll down.
i could eat the word calzone
and become
anything i was told
 not to want.
pickleball
deep-fried in the undulation
of half a building sweaty as asphalt
 with racket handle bodies
jostled on the up,
still swinging. mosaic
of faces betraying
 gravity with all the gusto
of a tide, timelapsed, lunar
and loosening. sexy loser
giving up the glory for more
 lively dreaming. asleep

around the rim of a sip
sounding like powder
on the brow.

got the stagelight melts,
the heebie jesus communion repeats,
angelic
in the overtake, i blip and blink
until i'm too holy
to take home. i'll bed down
somewhere between
your accidental caress
and tomorrow.

countrysider

i think i could've been a farmer, and if not
a farmer then the sod to steady the barn.

in my head are the posts of a barbed wire fence,
they endure more than they enclose, only hold what they can
stand to lose. when fruit trees wander in and scatter
their memories there is a moment where the lines of my palms

are wiped of dirt, i am new again,
and then there is the overripening—

seeds sprout things that wander off,
more fence posts need hammering and each day

i learn more of what it means to be a field,
not a herd.

grandfather is my name

i've decided that boring is the best way
to mend a lifetime,
to tuck tail and take my grumbling to the plains,
navigate a river through
the deadfalls of a country where all old men sigh
and talk of the good old days as if
they were the only things left worth believing in. i am
no better with my hermit-like devotion to isolation,
romanticizing the human devoid
wilds of everyday places as if i were hostile,
an alien,
satan, sipping his ipa at the end of each extinction.

something about the worst of weather reminds
me that we will deserve whatever we lose,

that these catered rainforests
on the b-side of humanity will one day be the seeds
that push our sodden bones
to the sky, souring on the breeze
of a new beginning, a genesis open
to chapter one, our names
revised
from each page, the shocked silence of our gaped fish
mouths hanging somewhere in the spoils
of oblivion, a final slashing of tires, our world spinning out
in one last burning rubber smell.