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## My Questions Go Unanswered

Tonight my father, as a young man, is wandering  
the darkness above my head, lost  
in the thin hills west of Hermosillo.

And the child I once was  
paces room after room, looking for him.

Some nights I don't sleep for the two of them.  
One lost, one searching.

Beneath his boots, sand scours stone,  
his ear to the elf owls,  
small as sparrows  
in the pale flowers of the Saguaro.

In her nightgown, she sweeps  
past halls and doorways, skims  
the staircase.

I want to tell her  
it's her fatherlessness keeps me awake;  
it's his wandering alone makes me want  
to rescue him.

There's a thin blade of moon out,  
and she won't rest until she finds him.  
A scholar of pain, he has too many  
years of study left to him.

Now I hear her climbing to the roof.  
She's trying to see over the curve of earth,  
catch the song of the smallest owl  
in the world.

Where is God tonight, the one  
who made love so difficult, our lives  
                    filled with estrangement?  
This night as every night, my questions  
go unanswered, even as I know  
                    their futures, as I know  
by her standing on the roof, she's thinking  
if she believes purely enough,  
                    she could open her arms and fly.

# Hungering

Full morning, the men in the field  
standing in the bed of the truck,  
                    heaving bales of hay  
with a steady drumbeat onto the floor  
of the barn, and high in the trees, the owls  
                    are calling again.  
I have heard them in the night,  
a sound like a wooden flute, and know  
each is hungering for the other  
hidden  
                    in the congregation of pines.  
The male, earnest, fervent, an element  
of concern in his notes, waits  
                    until its mate answers,  
and then the frantic rustle of wings  
toward a closer pine.  
                    Orbital, planetary,  
just shy of panic  
                    is their longing for the other,  
made to be, like us, spun blind by love  
that feels as much  
                    like sickness unto death,  
the beloved the only cure.  
                    For years  
my father kept an owl in the freezer,  
bound by his need for it,  
                    the glassed eyes,  
the beak's slow curve, the frozen wings  
                    part of his own lost wildness,  
as though a part of his soul  
had stretched its mottled wings  
                    and flown into the night.

I, too, have chained myself  
                  as one indentured to mystery,  
the stars' high singing and the moon  
flying over the trees,

when that loneliness overtakes me  
and I'm famished,  
tethered to my loves soul to soul,  
                  my palms pressed  
to the drumbeat in their chests,  
that which holds the spirit down.  
Now the truck clatters down the lane,  
loosed specks of hay dust floating in air,  
                  pieces of light  
                                  broken off the sun.  
And the owls, high in the high pines.

A sudden rush of wings and gone —  
not even the sweetest birdsong  
                  could assuage such grief.

## Poetry

One day, Poetry entered me.  
I don't know precisely  
                                  where or when.  
I was young. A child.  
While my parents argued  
                                  in a darkening room,  
                                  I stood behind them.  
I heard them speak my name.  
I learned what my mother had done.

It was around this time  
                                  Poetry entered me,  
a bird of purred smoke  
as if from a smothered fire, a bird  
who folded her wings and hid  
inside my darkness.

I saw that my father had gone,  
and that others had lost their faces.  
The night left me alone  
to wander its endless rooms.

As I grew I began to hear  
                                  the leaf's litany of grief  
whispered to the branch,  
ground beetles' secrets spilled  
                                  to the rain  
and the bitter grasses' to the frost.  
Poetry sat up in me  
                                  and sang her evensong,  
promising we could tell the truth,  
                                  she and I,  
promising we could tell everything.



## The River Asked Me

When the river asked me  
where was the path  
                    to my father's house  
while begging the stone coins  
of his own father,  
I didn't know which I'd find —  
the father watching at the window  
or the one in hiding  
                    behind the mountain.

I didn't know then all the ways  
leaving resembles arriving,  
couldn't tell the colour of the moon  
                    setting into the sea  
from my own *amen*.

And what did she see, Moon,  
                    before she drowned,  
but my father lying down to die  
just before I raised my knocking fist  
to his door?  
                    In truth,  
he was a withered blossom  
                    ripening into fruit,  
a man between two countries —  
                    ruin and beginning —  
a man who would awaken  
                    a stranger to himself  
while I visited his dreams  
as beggar, thief,  
                    wraith on the darkened stairs,  
my mouth filled with stars  
and the road's dust.

Perhaps it's why neither of us  
can stop remembering,

his voice the dawn to a morning  
in which the frost burns away each hour,  
his dreams  
the dawn to an evening

in which the moon starts over,  
thin from her own dying,  
and buys her passage  
with the fragrance of jasmine  
mixed with the future's tears.

## In Both My Hands

My father who wanted to die  
    is now content with living.  
And my father who wanted to go on living,  
    now is content with death.

I balance them in both my hands  
    whose lamps I orbit,  
        little planet,  
    winter's moth.

One unwrapped his losses and lived.  
    One folded up his joys and died,  
both alive in me  
    along with the wild animal  
        who is God.

The blind stars give and give away their light  
while the moon remains  
        deaf to its own silence,  
and on their backs the weightless birds  
    carry the sky —

this, the mystery by which all things  
are connected —  
what enters, unstoppable,  
    and makes its refuge,  
        the small sabbath  
that does not care if we are faithless,  
my fathers, living and dead,  
    and God's paw print  
in the snow at morning,  
    his breath still frozen on the air.