



daydream | induction

a UCLA student poetry anthology

06/
2022

daydream induction and its collaborators are not
liable for any damage caused to governments,
cookies, the human psyche, shoe stores,
narcissistic abusers, jesus fuckin christ, the NRA,
nihilistic preps with gaming monitors,
and burnt out queer kids who cry themselves
to sleep listening to "Class of 2013" on loop.

side a

yasmien abunamous
june constanze
rosemary galloway
kellie grezinger
ashley kim
mason mcclay

side b

alik shehadeh
sara shirazian
katie waterhouse
minami williams
addison wingate
paul zhang
medwin zhu

Addison Wingate

24 May 2022

To A State of Unliving:

Hi there, I hope this letter finds you well!

I know it's been a while since we connected, but I wanted to circle back on our last conversation – are you still available for next Thursday at two pm?

There was a shooting this afternoon in Uvalde, Texas.

eighteen kids are dead and two teachers, too, and they keep telling me it gets better but I'm not sure how long I can wait.

Hi there, I
hope this letter finds you well and
available some time this week for a test run of that
oblivion you listed? Hi there,

they tell me to keep going and they tell me it gets better but between Hitler's birthday and Hitler's reincarnation, I'm just not sure how much more of this world I can take; hi there,

hi,

I want kids.

Not now, but one day, and I want to drop them off at kindergarten with a stuffed animal tucked away at the bottom of their backpack, and it would be really great if they,

you know,

didn't die at seven or at ten or ever,

at least not before me. Hi there, can you

meet me at the corner of Broad and Main I don't think I can do this anymore because kids are dying,

kids that won't have their first date, drive a car, have a cell phone,

really know what folk music is, kids that won't grow up to learn how to play basketball or be in a play or finish third grade, kids that won't host their first dinner party or walk across a graduation stage or maybe ever try

a soda pop if their mothers were as strict as mine I don't think I can do this any more.

Hi there,
can it all end? Can they stop telling me things will get better and
change things instead hi there, I want to celebrate the birthdays of my friends with
cake not at graves hi there,
fourteen kids are dead and then
eighteen kids are dead and
the police killed another one – eighteen years is still
far from grown hi there,
are you still available for a quick meeting, I would love to onboard soon so as to skip the rest of
the
deaths that I know I'll see if I stick around. I'll get

high there,
between the tombstones and the prison walls. Fade out into open ground so maybe next time it's
me they shoot down. Hi there,
apologies for the lengthy letter, but I
miss you. I don't remember all that well but from the
stories I've heard I'd love to visit sometime. I guess we can meet

sometime after the New York Times's next publication and before the candlelight vigil do you
have
some time to maybe meet? I miss you.

Resignedly yours,
someone
born after Columbine, conscious
around Sandy Hook, shocked about Pulse,
organized by Stoneman Douglas, sad from
Aurora, tired by Uvalde, and
waiting by.

Paul Zhang

For the children

The bathroom lights illuminate my phone
Was written on the missile.
As my weary eyes trace the racing images
The station was being used as an evacuation center
I'm still trying to wipe off the fog of sleep
When it was hit by an OTR-21 Tochka.

I usually wake up around seven thirty
The crowds assembled Friday morning
I stumble, bleary-eyed, on my way to
ahead of an arriving train
The bathroom. Thankfully most
in Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region
People are asleep.

Russia's defense ministry initially said it used high-precision rockets
I wear nighttime contacts
But after the scale of the casualties in Kramatorsk became clear
Whose rigid shape molds my eyes
it claimed the strike was a "provocation"
So I have proper vision.
that "has nothing to do with reality."

Sometimes the contacts hurt
was hit at about 10:30 local time
More than my bladder is full
consistent with the use of a cluster-munitions warhead
I fish out my contacts
The missile killed at least 50 people, including five children.
And race to the toilet

I open The New York Times on my phone
death rained from the air

A True Account of Talking to My Department of Mental Health

“Hey!”

“Listen to me!”

I imagine an official wearing my face and a three-piece suit.

He looks peeved.

“Mental Health keeps asking for you.”

I observe the scenery around me instead of looking at my official.

In the distance, a billboard flashes

“also please stay committed through the year”

“or its going to make me look pretyt bad lol”

“in addition to just not being cool”

The official snaps his fingers in front of my face.

(I can’t really snap my fingers, but I imagine my officials are more talented than me.

Especially the Department of Mental Health.

They need to be.)

“We know you’re not happy with this commitment.”

I point to the billboard and talk to, or talk past, my official.

“But they need me to stay committed.”

In my peripheral vision he rolls his eyes.

The official touches his earpiece
mouths something I can’t hear.

The billboard is engulfed by a explosion

A pressure wave generates a boom that rattles my ears.

I finally look at the official.

He grins.

Opens a suitcase I hadn’t noticed before.

I spot a laptop, a projector, and some documents.

“Time for a PowerPoint presentation.”

“Aren’t you me? I don’t use PowerPoint.”

The official furrows his brow, just like I do.

“Sure, Google Slides.”

He’s suddenly holding a laser pointer and gestures at a pie chart.

“Now, I want to remind you that

every single friend you’ve asked for advice said...”

He advances to the next slide. I read it at the same time he speaks

I THINK YOU SHOULD
RESIGN

I nod slightly. The official smiles,
showing handsome white teeth. He seems happier now.
The next slide is a graph. The x-axis is labeled TIME and
the y-axis is labeled STRESS.

“As you can see—”
“Mental Health projects that your stress will reach burnout levels”
The official plays an animation on the slides

cartoonish sounds of breaking glass as
the line shoots past the screen’s border.

A moment passes while
I bite my lip,
sniff the air,
bounce my knee,
tap my foot. When I can fidget no longer,

“What do you want me to do?”

The official seems very pleased with himself.
He pulls out a sheet of paper from his suitcase
which reads COMMITMENT TO RESIGN FROM COMMITMENT.

“Sign here, please.”
He hands me the Muji pen I use in daily life.
I sign.

June Constanze

The Trials and Tribulations of Transgender Shoe-Shopping

“I’m sorry,” she says,
With that customer service tone
Apologetic, automated, powerless,
“We only carry shoes up to a women’s size 10.
You could look in the men’s section.”

Disappointment turns into a vision
And I possess the body of
Regina George
Being shooed away from a 1-3-5 store,
And Fatema Mernissi
Navigating the Western Women’s Harem¹.

The fashion world demands
Lolitas from our bodies.
And scoffs at how they respond to time.
If your feet are too big,
You can’t do your gender like the rest.
If your hips, your waist, your inseam,
Your arms, your shoulders, your gut,
Your chromosomes,
If they betray you,
So would we.

“It’s just biology.”
“It’s just business.”
“It’s just the way of the world,”
“That’s why you can’t be stylish.”

I pray for the big-boned biologists,
The transgender economists,
The plus-size philosophers,
For they too would curse those industry dogs
With every blister and too-tight garment.

¹ Falema Mernissi, “Size 6: The Western Women’s Harem”

I entreat you, Lord God,
Almighty and Immaterial,
Please watch over not only us
But our big-footed cisgender sisters
And the high school juniors
Who wear men's size 13 Nikes.
Disillusion Nancy Sinatra
Because alas,
Our boots were never made for walking.

Camus' Cocktail

Sometimes when I'm at a soda fountain,
I like to do something that's very
"Not like the other girls."
I fill my soda cup with
About three parts Coke
And one part Fanta.
Some days, I'm feeling orange,
And others, I'm feeling cherry.

I started doing it at a McDonald's
In San Francisco
Just because I could.
And now I do it,
Just because I can.
I do it just to do it.

There's a universe of concoctions
In my hands.
It's all very experimental.
What happens if I change
The Coke:Fanta ratio?
What more buttons can I press?
What flavors can I combine?

In my curiosity
I become a child.
I partake in sensory rapture,
The experimental pleasure of the simple.

The lemon atop the castle of books.²
The grapes and cheese.
The laundry and taxes.
The corn dog soaked in tea.³

I do it just to do it.
There's no reason to do it,
And no reason not to do it.
There's no meaning behind it,
And yet it's not meaningless.
Life is temporary.
Fantacoke is forever.

That's the gist of living, really.
Knowing life is meaningless,
But making Fantacoke just because.
Knowing choice is an illusion,
But indulging in it anyway.
It's called being American.
(Could you mix sodas in Russia? I think not!)

² Motojiro Kaiji, “Lemon”

³ Natalie Wynn, “The West”

Minami Williams

Addiction Angel

I had never been an addict,
until you ambled into my life
When I first met you I was uninterested
with no intentions of us being something more
than just exchanging of texts here and there

I slowly found myself anxious at every ring
hoping it was you with your

Or what I thought was
sweet and innocent *I hope you have a great day*

These texts soon turned into actual words
where then words turned into physical touch
and as much as I wanted to tell you

I love you
I kept this not so secret intimacy to myself
to protect what has been neglected before
But you would never do that

Right?
To borrow something I gave and return it drained

The more time I had with you,
the more of you I had,
I felt myself in a high
never wanting to come down
to never wanting to let go
of you
of these times
of the numbness

My brain confusing you, releasing dopamine,
your hands gripping my body
your mouth silencing mine
rewarding me for this toxic attachment

I lay drowning in bed from withdrawal, abandoned,
friends, family, things not related to you

no longer comfort me, cannot comfort me,
it's only you that I want

I want you to comfort me
even when I know all that you have done

Impulsive and compulsive decisions run through my veins
nausea flowing through my body

*I need
you*

But more of you will only delay the inevitable
And I am relieved, clear of your phenylcyclohexyl piperidine

I was an addict,
addicted to you,
to your angel dust
until you finally disappeared

Irregularly Irregular

She flourished into something
almost unrecognizable—
tainted by the touch of curiosity,
temptation, masculinity, monstrosity

She watched herself
struggle—running, chasing, hunting
phantasmagoria
and finally coming to the realization that
her purity had metamorphosed

No longer a velvety vanilla virtuous
woman

Instantaneously her eyes open,
unhinged,
she continues,
until she no longer could

Rosemary Galloway

Muse

A thousand goat eyes or none
Choose wisely

If you pop a goat eye between your lips
Crisp, it runs

You are The Viewed
Mustn't move now,
Fish eyes find

Better not, breathe
They find opening in any orifice

If you allow the goat eye to
Fall off silver spoon you

Are alone

The unseen is the unmentioned
The obsolete

You are The Voyeur
Pick up kaleidoscope

To find
They are eagle eyes

Join the mass
Picks up in pitch
Forks

Consume
Or the consumed

Shopping

Does detritus tether?
TangleMangleTie to a sphere a space
A place caked in decades of the discarded

You cannot exist without leaving something behind
By products of the body
Grow and gather into dirt

Fingernails and hair and body fluids and shit
A part discarded
Forgotten
The ephemeral cannot forget

Plastic doesn't degrade
Buildings can only topple (never crumble)
Copper builds a coating
Glass shards and becomes dust that doesn't decompose

I suppose we've corroded
Ourselves and everything we touch
Mold crosses threshold with an outstretched forefinger
The snake eats its own tail, consuming whatever pieces picked up with it
Us
With it

Rainbow beaded bracelet adorns my wrist
Strings snap and beads half
Scatters and smatters
You pick up a fork and it comes up blue—it's in you

Me too

If we kiss hard enough we can trade beads
Purple for pink
Depending on your preference

At least skin rots and blood reaches lividity

Kellie Grezinger

Feral sweeping

You claw at my cunt
like a starved animal
all too eager to tip
the souring milk bowl in your favor
but I am no better
holding bones in my mouth
suckling for traces of lost marrow
the whole ride home,
the music foreboding
the great nothing to come
when the high sun strips us totally
and the unflattering chrome of your teeth
glistens and blinds in the morning light
your eyes zip shut and I allow your jagged chest
to jut into mine haphazardly
For days, I will struggle to catch my own air
and yet, I am the taker
piggybacking off your long stride
using you to move along my place in the wind
to watch the day undress you
to make you late again
a pattern unwilling to be broken
through the open window,
the church bell sings, a baby wails
and I want to run
but you are lying still, stark naked
atop the sheet spoiled with the sweat
of two hearts pounding at the door
of one crooked rib cage
where you cling to me like a crucifix,
praying for one last kiss
I sweep my teeth against your neck
primed for the hurting—
primed for the kill.

Meshes of the Afternoon

after Maya Deren

A plastic hand
descending
to place the petal'd stem
on the ground
where the twin shadow
of a woman (a weapon of mass
invention) picks it up
to hear the telephone wind
rushing from her ear to his
her hand, blaringly alive
on her thigh where the rose sits
dismembered from the root
dying, through the peephole:
the old nun runs her long train
along the sidewalk that leads to his door
the stairs are lined with knives
she skips over them like a child
the dial tone claiming
her presence like an earthquake
traveling impossible distances
to split herself into one, two, and then three tones
for the shards of a man
his reflective face proving the magnitude
of the sea: lethal as he

Katie Ryan

The Cookie

I am burdened by a petite paper bag.
Inside are eggs and sugar and carbs and calories.
Baked to be tempting, baked to be torturous.

Disgusted by my desire, I let the dessert haunt my desk
for three days before I am betrayed by my own body.

My nose is first, the sweet smell of chocolate taunting my resolve.
I pick up the bag and peer inside.
My eyes widen at the shape the demon has taken; round, soft.
My stomach bubbles and begs for just a bite.
I break off a piece with my fingers and place it delicately on my tongue.

I can feel it in every inch of my body.
Parasite legs crawling down my throat, immune to the acid in my stomach.
I stare into the mirror and watch as the creature transforms inside of me.
Contorting and expanding, adding inches to my waist in real-time.

I must reach down there and get it out.

When I return to the mirror I realize that I was too late.
Evidence of my crime is painted crimson over chubbier cheeks
and accentuated by a tighter cotton t-shirt.

I stretch my arm out and my fingertips graze glass.
I wish I could feel the girl who lives in the mirror.
I wish I could take her in my hands and mold her like clay.
I wish I could pinch off all of the parts that are making her cry

Tonno's Bar and Grill

I blame the bartender.
I asked for a vodka cran
and she poured me a coke glass
full of grey goose and splashed
a sip of cranberry juice on top
“for color.”

It is 11:30 p.m.
and I have had three of these
and I hate crying in public
so I am sitting, legs splayed out
in front of me on a dirty
linoleum bathroom floor.

I look to my left
and find my reflection
in a cracked, graffitied,
full-length mirror.

I try to fix my makeup
while I am still crying,
wiping mascara from
underneath my eyes,
coating my fingers black.

I take these blackened fingers
and make a gun of my hand.

I watch myself in the mirror
bring this hand gun to my temple
and then I get angry
and realize that if anyone deserves
to be crying on a dirty bathroom floor
with a gun pointed at their head,
it's him.

I am learning
that murderous women
actually just decided

to save themselves,
to stop the suffering at the source.

Ashley Kim

Do Korean women dance?

from a talk by Min Jin Lee

She steps out
feet clothed in straw
dust already staining
white cotton socks
brown

She hikes up
her faded blue skirt
azalea-clothed arms angled
to reveal clumsy feet
that begin to dance

She follows
no rhythm save for her
own
moving to the heart
beat of her inheritance

Seeing her move
the fisherman runs
and returns with his worn drum
the nursing mother pulls
out her spit-stained reed

Seeing her sway
the pansori singer
opens her mouth
and finally allows wind to pass
through her chords

Seeing her dance
the village people gather
for the first time since
the soldiers barged in
with their guns and their names

They join in the revelry
hearts clutched together
in joyous communion
voices rising
up to the heavens

And in the middle of it all
is the girl
head tilted up to the sun
salt tears and salt sweat
flowing down her hairline

as she dances, hands lifted impossibly high

First: March 1919

i. Before

Mother does not know yet that
Brother left the house to demo
with the other youth. This morning,
he woke up and got dressed,
eagerly ate the breakfast Mother
prepared for him, played a couple
rounds of spin-the-top with me,
and left with a cheerful goodbye.

She thinks he is going to school
but I saw him stuff a flag in his uniform pants
and I knew what he was going to do.

My brother thinks I shouldn't know about
scary things—like ghosts, big animals, and dark forests,
like pain, war, and foreign people invading
our land— because I'm a girl and I'm
younger than him but it's only by three years!
Mother's about to scold me now, I can see it
in the way she turns to me.
I turn to my books before she can.

ii. During

Mother just came home and is telling me to stay inside—she's heard about the protests at Seoul from her friends. I've never seen her like this, her hands are shaking, worried and angry. She tells me to sit on the bed and stay there until she comes back. So I sit on the futon, patchwork quilt draped over my body. It's been getting warm these days.

I wake up to the cold—the quilt has slipped into a pool around me. It's dark outside now. The sky is the color of my worn blue socks and everything is still.

iii. After

Night is gone and it's morning but everything is different. It's too quiet. The house feels empty and scary even with all the light filling in the space. I miss Father.

If he were here, he would be holding me now and no matter what was going on outside, I would feel safe. I miss the way his sharp face turned soft when he laughed, the way he would always help me win spin-the-top, the way he brushed my hair every night, the way he would dance with Mother without music when he was particularly happy.

But he's not here anymore. One morning, soon after the soldiers came with all their guns and all their yelling, he left the house and never came back.

I can't go back in time. I'm young but I know that much. I hope my brother comes back. I hope I can play spin-the-top with him again. I hope he will have a million more days of eating my mother's food. I hope That we will grow old enough to talk

about all the scary things he does
not want me to know.

But in the meantime, I hold myself
under this quilt and fill all the empty space
with myself.

Sara Shirazian

An Ode to Breaking Free

i promised you we'll talk but
there's this guy, the one you
warned to not get close
to, afraid he will suck
me into his tactics, play
me, toy me, expose me, and
steal my heart

away from yours

you must've known
you must have known the love
you served on the table and
forcefully spoon-fed to me
was never true love, but it was merely
mother gothel's love to rapunzel:
keeping me, shielding me, 'protecting'
me in a shed strategically stacked brick

by
brick

with *you'll never find a guy like me*

to no other guy would

deal

with you

the way i do

and I—

i believed you

spending years of my life isolated
from the men with sharp teeth believing
that these tears that shedding from my
eyes on a nine-to-five schedule

was

normal

in our little shed you sat me
down, brushing my hair and singing to
me all the ways in which i
am not good enough for you nor

anybody else

but
it's okay
because by the end of the song you
carefully place me on your chest and
allow the rhythm of your heart to
hushhh
me
down
exit

two years later and with
him love is no longer
scouting safe spaces to shed
my tears alone, nor is it bracing
myself to meet you, face to face,
to mend us to only live through
our daily dose of toxicity
again

it's a dream

a dream where i am the small
chick snuggled up to his yellow
fuzzy chest as he brushes my hair and
sings to me all the ways in which i
am more than enough for him

a dream where i waddle
around, happily following his trail
and calling out for him without
worrying about a
you're too clingy

a dream where he continuously
turns to his side, ensuring i'm
not too far forward nor too far
back, but by his side:
his partner in crime

a dream where even as he
coops up in his nest, playing
lego starwars the skywalker saga
and counting down the seconds
to slumber, he still

attends to me and manages to
flutter my heart, brighten my
grin, and lighten my eyes with
the gestures and words you were
too busy to offer
you're asking for too much

a dream where i shy away from
his compliments, tucking my
head into his silky chest for
him to only head
 lift my
and repeat his words once more
you are beautiful

like a caterpillar breaking out of her
cocoon of isolation, i no longer
fear love the way you trained me
to, but i run down the yellow tulip
fields with the wind rushing through my
white spring dress and bare legs
chasing after no longer you but
him

and now—
now,
i've finally broken free
from your hypnosis.

Medwin Zhu

Neverland

Past the brumous cirrus in the land of East,
There once flew a creature who never ceased.
Her rump surged fire, out of crown perspired,
Raining azure meteors onto burgeoning briars.
At a shower of flickers, the mortals marveled,
Making vows in the hue of unsullied marbles.
Above secular loves echoed heavenly pangs.

Below ethers above soared the lonely Feng Huang.

Spark-forged-sea fell out of the night sky,
Meteors poured down through Mid O' July.
Cursed was the songbird who'd never land,
Her ardor charred forests into ruins unmanned—
Till a golden green glaze glinted far and wee,
A soul standing in fires, the last Plane Tree.
The phoenix dashed South across days and nights,
Purple daze dancing past splinters of lights.

But O, vicious was the curse of time,
In anguish the fowl sniveled in songs sublime.
The tree fainted dim on his last gasp,
And silently smiled at Feng's sore rasp.
Plane Tree wailing lifted his branch weak,
Pecked sweet soft on her scarlet beak.
His catkins glittered in her desperate fires,
Coating ethereal plumes in florid attires.

Tender were the stars within misty boats.
His trunk died back into debris of old.
Her rump eiderdowns froze dead cold,

Stiff she stood till none could hold.
From Northern Dome then came limpid ghosts,
Trees welcomed Feng with canopies unrolled.
Past wings gentle the willows caressed,
Loves unsaid shrouded farewells unblessed.

Over pale gales the phoenix blasted off,
Shrieking her solitude at cerulean cloud tops.
Feng exhaled her yearning into the indigo vault,
Down fell pristine snow spinning in waltz—
Wispy flakes covered bleaching crests,
Burying the Plane Tree into her breast.
The spotless blanket engulfed laments,
Heckling the finale of Feng's requiems.

Thereafter the phoenix forever flies,
For no silt could carry her songs denied.
Sour smokes wrapped around her dim wings,
Then brewed evening dews into pure Absinthe.
Nil earthly odor could she ever withstand,
Till eternity shall she be deprived of land.
The ground beneath was a place obscene,
Only skies could have kept her dreams.

To heavens above heavens, she wept sorrowful heat,
Melodies rained down onto snow-tucked leaves.
In molten blizzards new sprouts answered in glee,
Yet none ever resembled her Plane Tree.
By longing Feng Huang was till eternity jailed,
The one who forever flew in fires prevailed.
She tumbled down a flame of plunging griefs,
Into the enchanted nightmare of yestereve.

Yasmien Abunamous

Lovers

On an old poplar tree last Friday, I saw there were two lovers' initials etched out
In the shape of a heart
With an arrow crossing through. And I stared and stared because I wondered
About them. Were they young? Or old? Did they have shiny teeth and bright eyes?
Or maybe they smoked and fought and argued. And I pondered, and was curious,
And then went on my
Way. But that night I saw, on the counter, a saran-wrapped piece of cake that belonged to my
mother
With jutted out bits of fruit and chocolate—dried over and over and over with specks of mold
Showing through
And I wondered—maybe they were dead? Maybe they were rotting underneath the ground,
Two lovers splayed apart, broken up, dug up only to be specks of dirt and dust atop mycelium
filled cavities.
And I giggled at the image—I laughed and laughed a roarous laugh. Until my teeth ached
And my head hurt. And I had to sit down from exhaustion so deep inside my bones they nearly
Cracked from the weight.
I wonder if the lovers know I laugh at them. I wonder if they laugh back.
I wonder if my mother sees.

Dolls

The dolls in my room erupt in giggling laughter each time I enter —
So frilly and cute, small little girls and boys with big blue eyes and rosy cheeks,
Their blackened breath stained on their clothes.
Always muttering, always moaning, always shouting at me through the paint-chipped walls,
Their shushed whispers clanging against water pipes, past cobwebs
And asbestos ridden interiors—
Into the cracks, the crevices, the very core of consciousness,
Teething away at long swaths of marsh growth.
The dolls in my room sit and smile at me.

Delirious

My red eyes stare at the glob of toothpaste sat, so stubbornly, on the bowl of my porcelain sink,
white and clean except for the green amorphous blob
Resisting against all odds the stream of water, which,
aided by the curve of my hand towards its target—
sprays violently at it.

It is the culmination of discomfort in a morning also characterized by:

A jaw locked from the cold, the absence of heat,
(Fueled, cognitively, by the remembrance of the warmth of my sweet, soft bed, dressed so
deliciously in blanket after blanket and pillows
lingering with scent and loose strands of hair and tinges of dreams.)
An empty stomach, the sunscreen bottle waiting to be used, water splashing on the floor,
And the mourning of a night of deep sleep, a little death,
A place I can't remember. But most painful of all is the
Resurrection—to wake is a
Little like the toothpaste in the bowl of my sink!

Mason McClay

Thought-Memory Boundaries

1.

The past is wrapped in
opened plastic, yellow around the
button of a blouse. I swallow to
taste my own teeth and commit
to the mouth's perimeter. Couldn't
objects spill into the space between opened
fingers? But out in the open
a person stops to consider
multiple things simultaneously.

2.

Shine a light anywhere and something will be caught
existing. Many objects on earth have never fallen,
but one day will. A device that predicts all the places
you will never visit.

3.

A corner will eventually run out of itself. A surface of
glass shatters, is seen for the first time.
one's entire body could have been the fog
trapping the city light
but it was just a body.

4.

All movement could have been toward
a drunken companion around a fire
but were without a referent
and so were repeated with oneself
making a circle with one's skin.

5.

My shoes sprout rockets
but the significant threat of
another space keeps me here.
That hulking mountain of evidence.

6.

The meaning of our interaction
can be measured in spit.
I come out during a pause
in the sandstorm, the path before
me cleared by some great insect.
In a dream, a small black ant
drowns in the sweat of a massive arm.

7.

Once I
customs I came close to
a welch a burning syringe
about came
or other reason to be tired.

8.

A breath within an opened
cage falls short
just falls short.

9.

I raise the carpet in the hope some light escapes too.
Will it be turned around, lifted, divided amongst the corners?
When it returns, why does it spill all over itself, threatening apology?
The poor design of presence when
running up the stair hoping
you are fed.

Alik Shehadeh

Dear Anoush,

when you opened your eyes
the love scared you?

the love more a commune
than competition
you squirmed in that little drawer
the wood more a shield
than shelter

because through the slits of a crib
while everyone slept
you shuddered

no one told you to look outside.

more empathy for this stranger
than your own sister?
their pain seeps into you,
sinks onto me,
sleuths around the rest of them,

to admire or abhor?
I can't decide.

what happened?
I ask.

I fell off a tree.

I opened my eyes
knowing that nature is
incapable of that level of
methodical destruction
the intentionality of those marks
creeping down your arms,

what happened?

I ask.

I fell off a tree—
symmetry is nature's work,
they told me.

Which tree?

Tell me
Tell me
Tell me, Anoush,
Tell me which tree.

the Japanese Maple right there?
the crevasse of which
cradled me
while you shuddered
your drawer, my crib
I thought pain is possessive ('s)
but you made it communal (ours)

Why?

let me ask you, tree,
do you think those patterns
on your trunk intended to imprint
symmetry on the inside of my sister's arms?

*the tree sensed enemy
emitted ethylene
told loved ones:
danger*

poetry felt like freedom
until I realized
I'm tethered to the words
of someone else's mind
not really free at all
just a cage with invisible walls

And I love words
but I hate that mine
only beguile
those trained in the same
tongue as me
(and only those with tongues)

*my words, she said
as if she created
and was not bestowed*

Tell me, Anoush.

if you snatched the word *they*
before embodying *she*
could that fix things?

if you embraced loving *them*
before prioritizing *men*,
could that fix things?

they said *depression*?
I said no, demons.
you haven't seen these ones before,
there are no words for them.

when i asked
what happened?
I meant
who hurt you?

a period embedded in that question mark
because we only pose questions
where answers exist

brevity:
both how i'm trying to communicate and
the shortness it will last

writing this on paper feels selfish
look, tree,

I cut you
destroyed you
to record this piece of me
choking sense into the remnants of them

*the trees sensed ethylene
emitted toxic tannins
saved themselves:
all was well*

I love the symmetry of nature
but seeing it on
your arms I question
its legitimacy.

choose a flower next time,
become imprinted with petals
instead of scars
and then let me hold you,

close your eyes, Anoush,
let me hold you.

Daydream Induction

A UCLA Student Poetry Anthology

June, 2022

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