

My son reaches into the refrigerator for a peach. "Ball," he says.
"Peach," I say. It is easy to be precious until you aren't much

of anything anymore. Not long ago in Kunming, China,
they found the fossilized remains of a peach from around 2.6 million

years ago. It was, at some point, all but identical to the one my
son is holding. The moment they unearthed it, swept from it

a layer of ancient dust, the sky would've allowed for the sun's crepuscular rays to
shine down upon it as if to suggest an arrival. These days, the sea, when I see it

in pictures obtained by way of my more uninspired (albeit wholesome)
Internet browsing, looks particularly bored. *Same as any other day*, it seems

to be saying. "Ball," my son says, and he takes a bite.
How is it that you have come so far? How is it

that you have form, and what is flesh if not a carrier? A bearer of
genetic material? A host or a messenger sent from the unrecognizable,

holding at its core something we might recognize: duplication, a way
of penetrating the moment in all of its dreary infinity. I don't worry

that my son's teeth will graze over or even bear down upon that tight
walnut of a pit as they pass through its skin: soft, sweet.

There are ways of knowing: learning, having learned; those
are some of the ways. Today, in the afternoon of this, our second January,

I wake up and somehow the moon is the same as it's ever been, casting
its calcified rays down upon me as if to suggest an arrival. Even here,

in a loneliness that is not quite aloneness, each thing I have let myself be
is present, with me: "Peach," I say.

~

Self-portrait with My Dead
Sister

2019

There is a girl and a boy sitting on a curb
next to the ocean somewhere in Oregon

where the rain, which has just stopped,
has formed into a mud puddle, right there
in the foreground, in front of the boy's white
shoe: his pants are blue, his jacket

is red, and he is not smiling at all, which
I think is what makes her faintly upturned lip
look so much like a smile. Never mind

that these people were real, that one will
grow up and keep on being real
while the other will grow up and be dead.

Never mind the very brusque presentation
the speaker in my poem employs. We might
excuse him on account of his grief.

Ignore him for now and stay with the facts.

Fact: the boy is nearly five, which makes the girl seven,
which makes it 15 years before she drove past a stop sign
and then didn't do anything ever again.

But here is different. Here, where she turns up
the corner of her lip, pulls her legs to her chest,
and lets her chin rest on her knees, suspicious

of her own inertia, the static nature of her disposition.
Here, it is enough to believe that she could look up
and smile a real smile, and say something

truly irrelevant, something
I won't pretend to understand.

~

A Kind of
Purple

2020

In a new pair of trail shoes, khaki
cargo shorts, and a white
crewneck adorned with black
lines that cross over one another
in a pattern not unlike the wet
marks a child's finger will make
upon the thawing frost of a car
window, he veers from his path,
toward the canal's steep bank, camera
in hand to chase down
a seagull, of all things.

What he wants from all this is
anyone's guess. Probably just
a picture: the bird
a placeholder for something
he still can't name. See
the flowers that separate him
from the water? Hopeful yellow
somethings, tedious in the afternoon's
dull light. Sprigs of preserved
lace, funereal and fragile. They mope
in the mud while the gull, feigning
flightlessness, steps past them.

Only after the man drops his camera
to the length of its strap, lets it lean
his body forward slightly, like
a millstone cut for beginners,
and takes up toward the docks,
will the rest of us,
birds and bench-sitters alike,
relax for long enough to feel
how the air has shifted in this poem.

Something that is not a tight
cluster of lilac blossoms—but
still, so like those that grew
from the slender bone structure

of the tree my father planted
in his front yard the spring
after he lost his eldest daughter—
drop their heads, bowing
to the pressure of their own
elaborate weight.

~

Giants, When They Corner You, Will Rip You Limb from
Limb

2021

I laid my hand upon that page held it
In place for as long as I could a book
Cut and illustrated for kids like me
A wound had yet to open fatal if
Invisible upon Goliath's head
A boy's thrown stone exposed field a bright sky
Painted in behind them like a drop-screen
In an awkward family photo Saul out
Of frame fretting in his tent as this man
Shifted me on his lap, his hand around
My wrist: *say what you think it sounded like*
Clap of stone on skull brief hush in the wake
Of his fall low hum of sudden knowing See
how there's a moral to this story?

~