

Lament of the Ghosts of Two Men Who Crashed Their Truck One Night Thinking a Woman in a Wedding Gown Walking the Interstate Shoulder was a Ghost (2021)

Because we were afraid of our hands, we turned them on
themselves, balled & checked them

like drums, pounding knuckles in the pugilistic cleavage
of our fists' moony horns.

We wanted to make our bodies disappear, at least
wedge into each other's just enough to crack

jokes about how deep the other wanted
it. Rode each other hard all afternoon

& failed to outrun a single star. In the dim, we made out
this pearly tooth of a girl fallen fresh

from a common nightmare. She loped, rocking herself
like a bridge over whomever made her

squeeze into tradition, treasoned her body
& lived. Things like that don't happen here.

When she saw us, when we saw what we could be—
seen—we were struck straight, stiffer

than Hank's Stetson brim. How brittle our spines
when that horse bucked. Our death: lonesome

& inane. We should've unzipped
our jeans & lips, held our tongues

to the tails risen from between our legs. We could've
come hard. We would have been beautiful.

van gogh's ghost rents my body to tell me about the stars some say are dead (2021)

i've forgotten everything now but one story
 says my last last words a day after i failed
 to lodge a bullet in the monstrosity of my heart
 were the sadness will last forever
 & judging by passyunk's
 surviving stars crumbs in a couch's dark
 it's true & you whose heart is derelict the way
 history's a sacked shrine to persistence
 envision your wrist a resurrection
 of cardinals whistles in the chest
 of a pine assigning dry needles to dirt
 while lamplight riveting wet stoop rails
 tongues mucked street gutters
 unraveled in noon rain everything
 is letting go how cruel
 i must have been to hammer a round
 at the warped board of my spine in the middle
 of a ready harvest i think i wanted to
 die in the promised way not leaking
 just a listless wind in my throat
 pushing pulling back each breath
 a brushstroke repeated to my body's last
 privilege its rigorous indifference
 but my mind i guess was a tumbling city
 rebuilt off kilter by the hand of a drunk
 steeped on itself in a punk bar
 mirror constellated with names
 of forgotten artists & so sadness
 wishing your heart plucked by crows
 & broke down in their burnt out bellies
 to a cough even death is holy
 enough for me to say god
 damn look at these shitty
 shining stars
 how they outlast
 that they are nothing

An Unnamed Matriarch Does Not Partake of a Meal in my Dream (2021)

Her husband hurled a rock at the goat eyeballing him
 from a low beam of the half-raised barn.
 Its skull drooled. It leaned & fell
 without grace or remark & roused
 dust. White hide stretched & nailed between two sawhorses,
 the red bundle of the stripped goat
 browned all afternoon on dormant
 grass, in the shadow of its own
 skin & a man's wet fist, in that August of broken records
 & ribs.

Over curried goat she won't taste
 my stranger tells me
 she was born in 1842 & what he said to make her leave
 her mother's house for this: *All the things*
 no one says in real life. & then he winked,
 "You don't have to worry about a thing,
brother." & he hugged me, mercifully. Then, you can presume
 the torture started. Maybe nightly. Maybe not.

I woke & thought I knew dreams' new
 & certain histories. I remembered
 an armadillo tutued with its sweetbreads, tire tracks
 scorched toward the ragged wound.
 How I crossed red mash & smeared it down the lane,
 breadcrumb record of the dead.

Then it's a young guy's eyes like creek-shined stones. He's blacked out
 & wants to strangle me in a basement
 party because I cracked a joke he doesn't understand.
 A roommate plants against his shoulders, hard.

Look, she says. You're letting it. Everything is happening again.

in the lower canyons of the heart (2021)

i begin some days by asking
who died

some begin without me
bedsheets stirred
like a roux

making me
a cup of flour
poured evenly
into mourning

god does not know how to pray
so i teach him with my lack

of proper discernment
my urge

to sift what berries
any bird has eaten
& eat

to tiptoe the distant string
where sky & water slumber
cheek to cheek

then hold a candle steady
underfoot

if solitude is a garden

the sun longs for bark
& long weeds again

red light like a letter
read as it is written

& my thoughts are still
bees kicking & abandoning

repeatedly pink bones

nailed through the face

of a precious flower

a city siren
on its way
away

bricks learn together
in wet alleys
as it goes

how to let the echoes go

memoried shoe soles into snow

saw myself breathe not because
dissociated but because
breathed

sat on a ledge
let legs be not enough

am a precious flower

what asks for me
is listening

the answer
is more listening

sadness has enough names by now