

Sunday at the Hospital Garden

After an apocalypse
I feed the ducks and pray,
the songs I thought the
world had wanted so
generously—
a barking that lifted
the bird's head humanly.
I was bones,
next, flesh on the garden wall.
Flesh on the news
Flesh that wakes to cold
coffee and applesauce.
A freezing year or a
thawing year.
A beetle in your hair
We eat meat
and get over it
We cross streets of water
and get over it
I'm sorry we couldn't save each other.
What can feel like war
What can feel like another
A big pier on top of a
dancing, drowning world
in which we are
so rarely who we are,
a mother gesturing to
an infant tumbling into
ocean.
Having passed the test
of drunkenness, I come to
say to a sinking man,
see the sirens opposite
one's being, the small voice
telling of endings.
I'm wishing I could afford
to be restless. Instead,
I carry on in a
hollowed imagination,
thinking past the part
of us that can't help
but keep our backs
lined up to the earth,
at some face.

Alive and divided,
back to life,
in these hospitals
and emergency rooms.
My feet disappear into
pools of gasoline.
My first dog howls
in my mind—how
my brain once fired
and may fire again,
behind the blush
and unbrushed hair,
the city toppling.
The shadows of jumping
lizards remind me to
wait for heaven,
that it might hold
me like a grinning cat,
it might be as heavy
as a pair of ironed slacks
creased before the open
ground,
I might learn who I am—
free from worship and fear.

Pastor Mark Benedict

My first thought when I woke up from surgery
was *I'm a better person when I'm an alcoholic.*

With a soul of a golden casino,
I'd witness my love for humanity
at the slot machine.

The streets of my hometown try too hard—
the way one counts time when they are happy
and do not know it.

I hate them all, I love them all.

He tells me our history is hardly beginning
to view peace as automatic.

It's hard for a violent person.

The relief of work,
the restriction of a window—

The voice of the teacher in your mind
is ready for the palm of day, clean as citrine.

I think of the old drive home.

I trace this cathedral.

My vanity project is crumbling.

It is hard to keep score.

Cumulative

I am tired of the people on the internet
who call themselves empaths
and everyone else a narcissist.
I'm above no one, not even my past.
8 a.m. There's no puzzle to solve, no real life.
I bury my phone and go on a walk. There's an ad
for a matchmaker and a sign on someone's lawn
that says, *There's nothing inside worth dying for.*
The whole country's on lockdown
and I'm above no one. The world is yours.
I walk laps around my swimming pool,
wanting to fall in again how I did
after coming off the middle school bus.
My teacher read us *Treasure Island*
when pain was only the curiosity of my legs
falling asleep. Can I start over?
I had a love, but I lived underwater,
pretending to be beautiful and dumb.
We didn't mind. It's a question of staying
alive, and I still knew what it was
I was meant for. Old music, old wounds.
Old vinyl salon chairs and looking up
at my grandmother's new hair. Old horrors
and eyeliner flaked into my eyes. Can I start over?
The instructor begins a lecture on my weight
and the weather. She says I should talk
more about my hobbies.
When I got into the final round
of the chess competition, I knew
if I let him win, he still wouldn't look at me.
As girls, we're taught to be careful when it comes
to who watches through your windows.
Now you're told, don't bother. Put life up
to your screen. Arrow your warmth
and shudder in place. Shadowed and content.
Watery. It's very content, this half-life.
Can I start over? These are my thoughts on time.