

Rotated Sonnet for Saint Peter

*Feet or hands first* they must have asked Simon Peter, pressing his body to the cross.

Blood rushes to his head as Peter fights faint, sweat dripping from his nose to puddle mud, but then a nail for each denial's struck— Saint Peter feels the pain that Jesus felt.

Staring at his feet, above in empty sky, Peter feels the nail's slow and steady tearing through his soles. Peter pleads alone, *Why do I still feel so undeserving?*

Palm by palm Peter is nailed to his cross, but still he cannot feel his Father's touch. Psalms wither on his tongue as his lips crust shut; his final prayer dies in his throat.

## The Scent of Sky

In the country, the sky seemed so close  
that as a child I believed I could swing  
high enough to leap into a cloud.  
Years later, I saw the shadows of clouds  
on clouds from a plane, then closed  
the window as a storm swallowed its wing.

In the city, I'm always begging for rain  
to bring the sky's scent back down  
and dampen the glaring skyscrapers.  
I miss believing that the only skyscraper  
I'd ever know was a steeple, and rain  
was good to drink when it came down.

Next year, I'm going to live in the sky.  
I'm going to forget buses, how to hail  
a taxi, the screech of subway trains.  
I'm going to live in mountains, train  
my lungs to make sense of thinning sky,  
and let myself get murdered by hail.

*Tokyo Story*

—*After Ozu*

An aerial view shows a train cutting through  
Tokyo's collage of buildings.

Summer's heat washes out a cloudless sky  
until it's bone white.

In one home, a couple remembers how to love  
their children as adults

and wonders if they'll prefer their grandchildren  
as many others do.

The couple fans each other while lamenting  
time by the ocean.

When the old woman dies, her children show up  
late for her funeral.

The heat still unrelenting, film grain provides  
the rain and tears

as the woman's children barter for her heirlooms  
in the kitchen.

When the lonely man feels his late wife's leftover love  
inside her old watch,

he gives it to his daughter-in-law for safekeeping.  
The sky breaks.

*An Autumn Afternoon*

—after Ozu

Beyond the Gourd's noodle shop, Tokyo  
skyscrapers are replaced with rubble,  
powerlines by clotheslines, a moonlit  
skyline of poverty.

Inside his shop, the Gourd slouches drunk  
and drinking. He backstrokes through memory  
with the other widowers, cracking jokes at love  
and impotence.

When his body slumps with a slurred snore,  
he's the spitting image of my father  
when I found him at the bottom of the stairs  
drenched in vomit.

Before the firetruck and ambulance, rehabs  
that only allowed paperbacks, plastic  
poker chips, Dad would clutch the bottle  
like a buoy.

And while his body hardly escaped Alabama  
who's to say how far his mind has traveled  
having spent so many decades plunged  
in spirits.

## Apology to Brutus

When the neighbor's bull escapes  
again, I do not call the farmer.  
Instead, I spread my arms out  
in a cross so Brutus, the bull,  
sees me large as God Himself  
and lets me herd him to his pen,  
awkward muscles stumbling  
backward, when he could  
just as easily (if not more)  
crucify me on his horns.