

It

creeped through

every blessed corner like a curse.

Until I hallowly welcomed it.

Until I could only deem its presence familiar.

Until it seeped into my bones like sap,

trickled into my pores like first rainfalls.

‘Til it flowed through my veins like freshwater,

‘til the dirt beneath my fingernails stayed imbued

with it’s Mona Lisa smile.

Now I tie my shoes, a double knot danger,

and it is all I run off of.

A ribboned, black balloon bound around my pointer finger,

every occasion, never the life of the party,

my ball-point signature upon little contract lines,

I read the fine print—count my blessings,

count the days, count what stays and what goes,

what carnations in my decaying collection

will inevitably grow into a grave,

and Grief is a familiar friend;

attached at my hip, to my chest, the back of my neck,

in every guise, always there,

awaiting my company again and again,

until I am a pile of bones

in its cozy

one-way

home.

*(Here lies everything ever...Grief, My Best Friend).*

Once upon corner stores and grabbing the 5 bucks cash  
from my mother's hand, when the stress lines  
which lay upon her forehead were not so devout,  
leaving markings of lost days when her hands were not so weary  
of what would become of all of this, when I  
was not so weary of what would become of all this,  
and my daddy's blue eyes, so icy cold back then when  
I could still be mad at him, back in the day when I could  
stomp my feet, swear to god I hated him.  
My little brother bouncing and bobbing his head next to me,  
long hair dancing with him,  
wearing his boots like a sovereign of the world,  
and nothing could shake him—5 bucks was so much back then;  
blue slushies stained our lips and tongues and  
painted the thoughts in my head into oceans  
and dreams were dreams and I didn't think so much about  
what could happen until it's happening,  
when I didn't have to remind myself  
that chasing highs lead to moments  
left over, taken for granted—  
and terrible, terrible lows

*(these tales that live inside of me).*

i try not to dig you back up from the grave in which you rest,  
let you sleep peacefully there, but i keep thinking  
that as long as these cataract catastrophe tears fall  
upon that soil, there'll be some silence through the fertilizing  
hoping to god that i am not mistaking delusion for peace and i never thought me  
a dumping grounds for desolation 'til nothing at all was left  
of you, not even your ghost; and i began fabricating illusions  
in the outline i once saw you as, conjuring  
you up in lochness emotions, carving passages into the air.

“how come you never come around anymore?”  
just to feel close to you once again, planting carcassed thoughts,  
expecting you to soundly grow back out it, a cliché all on its own.  
i think i was fucked the second i told myself that  
we all hold things hostage that are already dead  
'cause tending to wilted flowers is a whole lot  
easier than learning to live without them,  
or maybe the moment i realized i was destined  
to become a writer 'cause sometimes  
it is hard to decipher what is still here and what has left

*but god...*

do i wish that meant these pages were windows in which

i could jump through,  
that it would somehow resurrect,  
or, better yet,  
keep them from ever leaving my hold  
and not ever having to learn to live without them.

*(pin-pricked realities).*

we can drink your favorite beer and talk about all that you've missed  
and maybe you'll tell me you hadn't really missed any of it at all,  
and i can hug you one last time  
and i'll tell you it's okay you weren't perfect,  
and i'll tell you that through it all,  
i still remember the time before you went to jail,  
on new year's eve, you told 8 year old me your one resolution was  
to be a better father—  
death's got a sense of humor...  
a raspy little chuckle in your ear,  
in your nose,  
*the sweet smell of rot,*  
the memories posthumous forgiveness holds, a bittersweet symphony,  
the ones i never paid enough attention to;  
the dirt beneath your fingernails and the dirt beneath mine that matched it,  
your ice blue eyes, the way mom would hug you despite of bruises you left  
and one second i am convinced the two of you never hated each other, playing catch  
in that valley heat, sunday football, hearing you shout when the cowboys scored,  
you mowing our lawn, hearing the coffee pot brewing that 5 am brew, how big  
my little brother's smile was when you were still here, milk at dinnertime, my senior year  
and you fixed my car, i told you thank you and it was the first words  
i had said to you in years, and some of the last ones before you died.

and it's a cold and it's a broken goodbye,  
the longest, most drawn-out poem,  
one that sits in my chest, my heart, a rocking chair,  
one that both greets and farewells,  
one that both smiles and cries,  
rubs my back with a warm palm,  
one that both begs and accepts,  
the daughter, bloody knees, feeble bones, calloused hands,  
crying for her father to come back down  
forgive her, forgive her, forgive her,  
scold her, hit her, hug her, haunt her, shake her hand, anything.  
because Grief is a long, drawn-out thing,  
yet the snap of a finger and 4 years go by,  
and your ghost, both vivid and white noise,  
dancing and tumbling in the background of my mind,  
tiding and waning,  
smiling and waving,  
still alive, still alive.

*(i think everyone else has forgotten the ghosts that live inside me).*