

Astigmatism

Bright lights illuminate
the cracked pavement as my tires roll across
we probably caused at least a few
sometime ago.

We knew we'd miss it,
that's the funny part.

And it's not funny, like I was with you,

but funny in the way I pick out new lip glosses,
with glitter or smelling like berries,
I'll grin to myself

And I'll think of you.

Driving these same streets
toy trains on a circular track.

We knew we would want to be here
Again.

Back when we lived
for the sixty seconds in every
minute.

When each inhale felt like we didn't know
what would come in the exhale.

Now we move in slow motion, calculating
the right time to exist, making sure there is enough
air for our hungry lungs.

We listened to the words *Do Not Wait*,
though we wish we would've, even just through the

exhale.

Twelve Pink Roses

chopped delicately to perfectly fit in
a ceramic white vase atop the shelf,
leaves trimmed to not overcrowd the flower's crowns
comfortable, on display for the world to see.

In two weeks they'll shrivel to a crisp
The same delicacy as before,
no chance of revival.
The only choice being to toss what once was
out the back door
launching them into the soft arms of the earth.

Last winter on the back porch
longing for the roots,
when it was just us,

smoke spiraled around our hair
traveling to the moon's warm glow.
It was cold where we were
and the cigarette between your teeth separated us
from the others inside

We had bloomed once
bright pink. The world marveling
at our petals in a perfect spiral,
round and round to the center.
That was years ago
before your thorns cut deep

I had just grown tired of being prodded
You said three words that night,
three words,
that you could never take back.
And I left you in the snow
with the rot of what once was.

Cliffside Waters

There's lots I want to say
to you, seagull

on the rocky shoreline.
Salt on your lips I wonder when

you've last tasted sweetness.
You wouldn't like it here,

and I know that for fact,
I don't either.

The seaspray in the morning air,
I can't offer much more,

and I would go bounding and leaping
to be where you are.

To hold tightly to your feathers
as they touch earth and salt below.

You know what monsters live down there,
please can't you tell me

about their teeth and venom
and ability to consume me whole,

So I don't have to hate it here?
Any detail you can spare

to rid me of this ache
that's here in your place.

Cherries On the Bank of the Seine

Under the willow I saw
you.
Plucking their red bodies
into your mouth one
by one.
A cardboard box full
their stems peaking out for you
to snatch. You spit
their pits into the river beside
you. A Tuesday afternoon, you lay
here, eating them. Your body flat looking
up at the July sun. And I still think
about you,
looking
up.

I wish I could trail your
thoughts. Ride around the bumpy parts of your
brain, what led you here? Unbothered by the blistering
heat. Watching ducks float by
your body. Hearing the whispers of the finches
dancing around you.

Better write it down or you're lost
forever.
I'll frame you in gold,
hang you somewhere behind my eyelids,
somewhere I'll have to come back
to.

I'll have to come back to
you, who I'd always desire
to be.

And you'll always be there
waiting for me.

Tilted Stage

If you woke up this morning to feel your guts twisting inside out,
if you can't arrange your pillows, refusing
to leave the confines of your untucked covers, I get it.
If the items on your list lay untouched
by the ink of your busyness,
if you don't feel like smiling at strangers when you pass,
don't smile at them.

I'm sick of putting on a show,
of watching California burn,
of seeing homeless men on every corner I pass.
It is freezing outside,
yet half of this country is on fire.
They say they want safety,
yet carry bullets.
And I could go on
filling book after book with all of the reasons why
I am sick.

If the only thing you can muster the courage to do today
is simply pull your striped linens over your head
and wait for it to be over,
I am there with you.

I don't believe in goodness,
and maybe I never should have.

The men who stare at little girls in gas stations
are running countries.
Grabbing them by their little pigtails and shoving them down flights of stairs,
Slamming doors in their faces leaving them to bleed out.
And they're getting away with it.
And they always have.

I wanted to believe
so badly
that we were safe here.
That we were loved.

But I have been thrown down the stairs,
I have been left bleeding,
by the people I share a stove with, our memories now charred.
By the woman that held my body, moments after I came into this world
while my mother's lie open, fighting to stay alive.

What is the world without the precious fight to stay alive
What is the fun in the game,
if everyone plays by the rules.

Sometimes I wish

I could be like you.

Going about my day, laughing
at stupid things I see on the internet.

Existing in my own bubble,
my priorities larger
than life, God, the Earth.

I would judge based on superficiality.
After all, whose body doesn't look the same
as it did at seventeen?

But if I were anything like you,
I wouldn't know the gutwrench of watching
single mothers struggle to take care of their sons.

Simple magic would go unnoticed,
like sharing an umbrella with a stranger,
huddled close to avoid nature's tears.

Sunshine wouldn't feel like
laying out tiny striped beach towels with friends,
sharing our potato chips with seagulls.

In the springtime I couldn't anticipate,
my grandpa's garden full of fresh rhubarb,
the phone ringing when he's cut me off the first
stalks of the season.

One does not need to
operate
with great malice
to do great harm.
The absence
of empathy and understanding
are sufficient.

- Charles M. Blow