



Boundary Street

A CAPA & CMU COLLABORATION
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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This chapbook is the result of a collaboration between students in the Advanced Poetry Workshop at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and literary artists at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12. Throughout the Spring 2018 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems. And ate pizza.

This collection celebrates this collaboration. We all learned from each other, and we are all better writers and teachers because of this project. We hope you enjoy reading these poems as much as we enjoyed working together.

Mara Cregan, CAPA

Jim Daniels, CMU

Allison Taverna, CAPA

(STAGE LEFT: Blue Computer Light Drowns Your Face. You Are Either Asleep or Dead.)

It was dark outside

 It's always dark outside

 And all the lightbulbs in this

 Spit-scrubbed driftwood house are
 broken

What i mean is,

 This is The Story of How I Do Not Get Your Attention:

 I hang from your apple tree and you pick an apple

My skin isn't smooth and chlorinated, but I'm trying

I'm a sucker for artsy self destruction

Take your toes off

Dip them in me, if you're not a coward

 I dreamt you could crash into me

 60mph

 And I loved you when my legs stopped moving

 I haven't been alive since

Maybe our veins are the prettiest

 Thing about us

Pop me like a bottle of

 Something Disgusting

I am waiting

I wish my father never started setting his fingers on fire, but

 You wouldn't like that story

I wanted you for 12 thousand million years

 You don't even know how to licorice my waist

You have never ever ever made me come

Home

 You want Poptarts™ frozen instead of toasted

 What's wrong with you?

I am made from sunken shrapnel bath salts

You're made from

Old spice/turmeric/snakeskin

You look like you could have me swallow my first bottle
of lysol disinfectant

Like you could make me feel so clean

Touch my
shoulder, for instance, or my left knee

Did you know the patella

Is the only bone in the body

...Me neither

You

Have never even tried to kiss me

But you have asked why I haven't tried to kiss you

Which is pretty conceited, honestly

I didn't love you,

Almost

To Adults Who're Shocked Teens Do More Than Eat Tide Pods

Excuse me if I can't think clearly but—
I'm only a teenager but—
I know how the government works but—
but nothing!

Stop giving adults excuses.
Sixteen years of "You don't understand,"
sixteen years of "You're too young,"
sixteen years of "Ugh, kids these days."

Why treat the future like flies?
Me?

Is it the malnourishment of my brain's biological ability to function?
Is it the inferior number of years I've lived?
Why should that mean anything?

Don't you know that wisdom doesn't come with age?
It comes with seeing your death in the barrel of a gun.

Don't bring millennials into this.
I'm not part of a generation political punching-bag.
I'm generation post 9/11,
Great Recession,
technological innovation,
Generation Z.
Z for zeitgeist,
the spirit of the times a protest sign.
"We are the 99%."
"This pussy grabs back,"
the zenith, culmination,
there's more of us than a label can Twitter handle.
No generation holds a candle to zeal like this.

Leave my throat raw and scathing,
I will still shout.
Leave my feet sore and aching,

I will still march.
Leave my body bruised and chafing,
I will still rise.
The youth-quake is here.

In Sickness and in Health

You call me up through the creaks
 in the floorboards.

You live there
 in the floorboards.

I tiptoe so you stay dormant.

You always
 hated
when I woke up
 with the screeching sun,
 vacuumed the living room,
 said it was too early for that racket.

At breakfast you twisted iron
on your ring finger
like you wanted to throw it out
 the window.

Do you know how many blankets
I knitted in those ten years?

28

times I stitched myself
across fractured ceramic
 on the kitchen floor.
You snapped so many plates,
 told me
 I drove you to insanity every night
Adam's apple shaking
 so hard you could measure it on the Richter scale.

I haven't worked on myself like
you wanted me to.

The doctors said my constant knitting
was a nervous tick, I would tell you now,
 it was my savior.

You told me you were done, gone, couldn't fix me—
I didn't cry.

For ten years in Holy Matrimony
I could hear you mumbling to your
God

to fix the broken marionette strings in my brain
and I know you think
I'm too far gone
off the rocker

you would know as much
'cause you married me even though
I'm a candle
burning without wax.

But I've knitted
28 blankets
in those ten years,
our voices broke like violin strings.
We were pizzicato,
you plucked on me
until your fingers fell off.

Man's Discovery of Fire

“Breathe (2AM)”

when I listen and cry

“Fragile, Fuzzy, Clouded Contentment”

road trip I never agreed to go on but I listened to this 200 times so
it was okay

“Daddy Issues”

one problem I don't have

“Into You”

I think I like girls

“Love Me Harder”

I like girls

“Cool for the Summer”

I LIKE GIRLS

“White Corolla”

Nini I miss you please drive across the country in a white corolla and
listen to casiotone for the painfully alone while watching fireworks with
me again

“Alejandro”

My boyfriend Alejandro hates this song

“Yellow”

Coldplay IS better than Radiohead

“Rat Race”

I love the way Brits say “oi.” Is “political British technocore” a genre?

“Monument”

was freshman year really so awful when I discovered writing and DGD
and the fact that pop-punk isn't just a genre, it's a way of life

“Tidal Wave”

yes

“Purple Reign” (that’s R-E-I-G-N)

the song I want to die listening to

“Save Your Name”

it’s too late for your name but not for hers

Somewhere Only We Know

Based off of "Somewhere Only We Know" by Keane

Take me to somewhere only we know.
Take me to the place where every conversation
we had didn't wear out my throat,
and where I didn't have to second guess
every word that came out of my clenched mouth.

Take me back to those easy nights
when we would sit in lawn chairs by the fire
and you would tell me stories
of drunken relatives, or your high school days,
or unconstricted nothingness.
It could've been anything, none of that mattered.
Hearing you speak was enough for me.

Take me back to a place
that I didn't fear entering.
Where gears didn't grind
with such severity,
where I knew how to listen,
and you knew how to hear.
Figure out a way to bring us back,
because I don't know how.
Take me back to where we knew how to love,
because I've been here for too long.

Melody's Nightmare

"Dada! Dada! Help, Dada!" My toddler proclaims her despair as I leap every other steep step. She stands on her bed and weeps in the darkness. "Cookie Monster!" Bewildered, I inquire. "Cookie Monster eat my hands." My wife enters and cuddles her in our beloved kitty-patterned pine rocker. "The Cookie Monster ate her hands," I say. By night-light illumination and space heater hum, we assure her that the shaggy blue glutton is harmless.

Holding hands, we recite God's promises from the 91st psalm: "he commands his angels to protect you." And the 62nd: "he is our defense and safe haven." And the 23rd: "he prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies." Giant, winged swordbearers guard this fortified tower. Behind the stronghold awaits a heavenly feast armed by our host: the Good Shepherd.

After Scripture subsides Melody's sobbing, she asks for a familiar Hebrew chorus. In song, we bless the name of the Messiah; we bless the name of the Lord. "Baruch HaShem HaMashiach Yeshua. Baruch HaShem Adonai." In song, we clap and welcome sabbath peace. "Shabbat shalom." In prayer, she requests, "Jesus, help Cookie Monster."

My Sister Pretends to be Blind

My sister sits on the floor beneath us during dinner. She's been doing this for thirteen years and by now, my mother is used to it. "I'd rather her sit on the floor than on the table," she tells me. But I wish I could see her smile, watch her scrunch her eyes closed, miss her mouth with her fork. She keeps her eyes closed, tries again. This time, the food falls off of her fork and onto her lap, staining her pastel purple leggings. I pretend not to watch. My mother yells at me when I watch her. "You're giving her attention," she says. "It's what she wants." My sister, still pretending to be blind, fumbles for a napkin, stumbles to her feet in search of a trash can, but all she can find is the wall, then the paper shredder. She leaves the napkin on the floor. My mother sighs, takes another bite of her pierogi. According to her, the weather is more important.

My Sister Who Calls the Police

The air in the house feels like paint, my short fingernails scraping the damaged hardwood. Each nail leaves a new scratch, carving sets of four lines into the floor. I stopped counting after I reached the twelfth set, my fingertips raw. My nail beds bleed out fear. I hear the muffled conversation in the wall. “She won’t leave the porch. She’s on the phone too.” My breath is heaving the white paint up, spattering. I leave splashes of white all over the floor of the living room. “Okay, I’ll see you soon. Thank you, officer,” the wall said. My sister walks back in. I watch the bangles on her wrist rattle as she puts the phone down. Splinters of wood had shoved themselves beneath my fingernails, bloody and terrified. She says something that sounds like pure sludge. I hold my hands over my ears and begin counting the scratches in the floor again. Always sets of four.

My Birthright is the Secrets of My Fathers

The mythos of my grandfather finds itself in shorthand like “Depression baby” and “Dodgers fan” and a heart given to New York while knowing it couldn’t die there. It twists itself around sentences like “good Jewish boys don’t play baseball” and “my friends didn’t understand stay-at-home dads” and “Grandpa hated cigarettes before they took them off TV.” At 90, his shaking voice summarizes his love and places it plainly before us. “Tell us a story,” my sister insists to lowered eyes and silence. “Dad doesn’t tell stories,” my aunt laughs. “Dad has never once told us a story.”

My father says startling facts in matter-of-fact tones, laying out a laundry list of downplayed woes as completed errands. He speaks of debt and failing grades like footnotes tucked below a life carefully constructed from the yarn he collected as a childhood unraveled before him. The details I know are well worn stills from stories I am always too young to hear. He shakes the same coins from his father’s work jeans to visit the same arcades and toy stores. The same lamp flies across a living room stocked with Hollywood details, shattering a relationship never meant to last. And each time, I abstract my father’s future back into a past too vague to touch.

I internalize the value of honesty before understanding how the truth hates to be concise. With age comes the wisdom to simplify my life down to satisfactory soundbites, cutting off pain at the roots. And I wonder which bites will become canonized in adages my relatives retell at dinner parties, and what images will stick in my child’s mind as I communicate years through visceral moments, dropping details and spinning simplicity too well for my memory to keep up.

Father Figure

*I imagine that I might someday
carve away my face with the razor
scrape away the foam and,
finding nothing there, no blood nor veins, see
my whisker-specked life mask flowing
-from Life Mask by William Henry Marchl III*

August tenth he held me, one hand over the bath,
drew a force field over my forehead
in the shape of a cross. He washed me
with silver shell water, 'will you's' dripped
down in cold streams. I cried
when his voice touched my face, I let it
drown in the fount.

Years later, his voice comes out in pieces
of gravel; I swim to catch. I feed him
tasteless wafers, wiping crummy corners
of his body. He no longer can hold me
in his hand. Urine pours into the bowl
next to his bed. I can't bless him with it.

Soon, his mouth will no longer open,
he will have just lips, pasted together
with dense spit, bones gelatinous as his brain.
I'm afraid he'll be his bed. Sunken. A fluidstained
mattress, a shapeless form
in the dark with no words.

Breathe in, Breathe out

*I'm so in control of my mind and my body
But I'm subconsciously forcing myself into a state
Of self bondage entangled by the ropes of my own mind
-Logic, "Anxiety"*

My homespun insanity
grows fruit in its orchard;
branches reaching outward in fragmented waves,
elegantly cross-linking
like neuronal connections.

My mind hovers between hallucinating
and descent into numbness,
like wild horses running headfirst into the resistance
before a magnificent flame
burns them to bone.

My fingerprints identify my presence on Earth,
invisible as a broken streetlamp,
sinking into oblivion, the unknown.
I lose myself in the glare of the other lights.

My thoughts collect when my spirit feels wrecked,
beaten over one hundred times,
by insecurities galore and I return to reality,
neurons gesturing me to find a single calm moment.

Behind the Fence

The garden down the street says “whites only.”
Women and men crowd the garden for Sunday service.
I see them leaving with boxes of corn and potatoes,
plump, fresh and clean without a dash of dirt.
Blooming lettuce heads fold into a ball.
The nicest crops in town.

If I would give my last coin to those folks,
they would scoff at my dark skin,
start a riot if I slipped in line to the garden.

They call themselves superior, elegant
people. Mean words crawl
from their tongues,
the n-word with a speck of spit.

The colored garden is surrounded by a fence.
It would only open for me to buy spoiled produce.
The crops lie in the crate,
mold scattered over oranges and grapefruits.
Mushy apples deflated like balloons.
The odor says they’re past due,
black spots like stamps on the potatoes.

I sit at my dining room table,
chairs on their last leg.
My last dollars held under my fist,
my hollow stomach barks.

I imagine not being pushed away because of my color.
My skin is attached to me like a sign.
Folks see me as a target.
I wish I could go to the garden,
stand in line and give my money
like everyone else.
Picking through the different fruits and vegetables,
I could finally bring food into my home.

Kelly Shows Me Summer

In the summer of 2009,
Kelly and I spend nights near
the meadows, peering through the clouds
like ants. I love the moonlight,
she says she loves
how small we are, like we could fit
in a backseat or the palm of someone else.

Kelly, with her mouth that turns glitter
to flame, convinces me the moment
is the only thing alive.

So, we scheme in tattooed alleys.
Spray paint boys litter our front lawns,
leave our bedroom
windows swinging like whistles.

This summer, we're slipping
into dresses and out
of our skin.

In our pine-colored bikinis
with the spaces between
our teeth, we unlearn how to be
seeds to the belly of the earth,
children to our parents.

Infrastructure is Expensive

The beauty of the star
is a secret of its light;
the soulless mechanicals
that comprise technology spite
the star and pollute the sky river.

-

This is not their fault, for
they lack even a sliver
of control over their actions.

-

It is instead men wearing hats
who cover themselves but refuse
this decency for lamplight in chats
concerning the price of things.
They speak in whispered word

-

for they know the hypocrisy
of arguing lamp efficiency as absurd
when the debt owed to starless children

-

cannot be paid in coin
or even stolen.
There are no attempts to rejoin
us while the coffers of hat-men are swollen
with galaxies of cotton in constant friction.

A Thousand Dimes

You do not remember the night
sky, millions of dazzling dimes
that you once marveled at.
The colors of the milky way stacked against your eyes.
A blank screen,
empty and alone.
You were mesmerized as a teen
by those stars. Where did they all go?
Weight presses against goosed skin,
fingertips throb with hope of exact change.
Your face holds a solemn grin.
Rattles of dimes beat your heart
as you try to buy food at the grocery mart.
The stars hang above a sunken head,
winking as they soon depart,
your food is molding, you cannot last very long.
Wrinkled fingertips reach for the night sky.
Pay is coming to an end.
A thousand dimes turn to ten
and as you pick the rest descend
but the pay **will** return once again.

What if there are waves that never come back?

Within yourself I recognize
an ocean as well as a shore,
although nowhere I could turn to.
Such place doesn't exist anymore.

The water remains bittersweet—
no trace of salt or sand, it seems
it does not flow or run in streams.
I am a trapped wave that cannot fleet,
somewhere water and shore don't meet,
even when your sand lies close by
and my tides endlessly arise,
we don't coincide, never collide,
we only push ourselves aside.
Within yourself I recognize

a brink that seems so welcoming,
yet doesn't let no wave break in.
I leave no trace, sand unshaken
every time I reach, trespassing,
the coast turns more disenchanting,
while I myself turn more unsure
if it is best to froth or soar
this deserted alluring beach.
You have rebuilt yourself to be
an ocean as well as a shore,

put up intangible seawalls,
tried to make them elude my tides,
to make them my resolve subside,
to make them try to make me stall,
unknowing that I always fall
back and go through, come through, break through
just to get back again with you,

because in your eyes I still see
both a loving shore and a sea,
although nowhere I could turn to.

Every time I approach your land
and leave longing kisses your way,
you send my caresses away,
exile their imprint from the sand.
You still refuse to understand.
Why you still remain so unsure?
Do you wish me to froth or soar?
Why keep this back and forth, if you
offer nowhere I could turn to?
Such place doesn't exist anymore.

Scarred Kingdoms

Promise to remember your roots.
You have seen the way he kissed her.
You're tired of tear-stained pillows,
tell Momma you never loved him.

You sprouted from Momma's teardrops.
A kingdom you built with bare hands,
you're too strong to do that nonstop
crying. A man cannot rebuild
a sacred temple. Let him know
you're not a toy from Toys "R" Us.
Exposing you with a photo,
then tryna beg you to come back.
Promise to remember your roots.

Heart cries out silly children.
You know someone must hear your groans.
Please don't touch me. Leave me alone.
He "loves" your brilliance,
the sweet embrace of your kisses.
Look in the mirror, tell yourself
someone must have got to listen.
Told me this time you were leaving,
you have seen the way he kissed her.

Too many restless, sleepless nights.
Arms wrapped around you like some sort
of protector. Tired of fights.
Tired of sleeping on wooden floors,
grow up and be your own hero.
You keep digging yourself this hole,
you are slowly falling apart,
heart into a million pieces,
you're tired of tear-stained pillows.

He doesn't support you at all,

destroying every dream that you
have had. Making you feel so small.
Sharp words targeted at your head.
He's the reason you're feeling blue.
To me it seems your love is dead.
Seems like he's attached to you like glue.
In the land of the free, fly away.
Tell Momma you never loved him.

Dinner for Two

I long for the touch of our skin.
Your eyes trace my every detail,
my body fills with vibrant heat.
I am not me without a you.

You pick me up in your Chrysler,
the engine roars as you pull out.
Light peeks through the trees, sight crisper.
My hair clouds my vision, blinded.
You park in front of the diner
and open the car door for me.
Feeling wind through my coat liner,
I long for the touch of our skin.

They sit us in a corner booth.
I order both of us a shake.
You smile at me, "What a sweet tooth."
The smell of the kitchen is thick —
burgers, grease, fries, onions, and tea.
We play hangman while we wait, smiles
and laughter hushed. You stare at me,
your eyes trace my every detail.

Between bites, legs linger, feet meet.
Your breath, stained with salt and pepper,
mixes with mine. Savory, sweet.
We talk about nothing and then
we head back to your place. Fusion
of your world and mine. You close
the door to your room. Seclusion.
My body fills with vibrant heat.

I wake up in your bed, those sheets
of yours wrapped around my long legs.
In your room, I can hear the beat
of the soft music echoing

in the halls. I find you dancing
as you make your breakfast to-go.
You kiss me as you are leaving.
I am not me without a you.

Lapses

When water's moving fast it turns white. Like blankness, like forgetting. But sea foam is white for a different reason, I guess, I don't know why it's so frothy. From the picture I can see my sister standing ahead of me, only a few inches from the lapping waves. She's standing on her tip-toes, I'm not; there are lines in the sand where the tide's been pulling me closer. The Pacific is always too cold for swimming, but too beautiful to just look at. It'd turn our lips purple. I can't see our lips in the picture, but I can see our shadows behind us, long in the late-afternoon sun. When Mom was our age she found a Japanese fishing float (but I think she was further north, in a rowboat by Seattle). She said it came loose from its net, and drifted halfway across the world. No one can set the tide loose, it's tethered, always. It recedes and returns to bite my ankles.

Self-Portrait As a Young Girl Who Hangs Her Cats on a Clothesline

I give the kittens a break after they've rehearsed
their hind-legged walk, pretend primates

Inside the house, my mother knits, slumped over
the kitchen table, lumpy like cold porridge

She hates the cats. They're strays, she says.
They're the uncombed heads of the neighborhood boys

who walk the streets in shirts without collars.
When she brushes my hair, I imagine her stealing

the cats' fur. When they rest in the backyard,
I watch. They dream in futuristic colors.

When she sneaks outside to paint their words
noir and hold them hostage in silent

films, I'll be waiting in the rose bushes,
my knees little animals gnawing

on petals and thorns, my eyes restless
as magnifying glasses, waiting to see the body

beneath them form into something
heroic. When my mother goes

back inside to finish her chamomile
tea, it will feel like the end

of a movie that I wouldn't understand.

Picture of Sky and Tamra, 2012

My hair is covering half my face,
but I'm noticeable and happy,
just as much as the girl next to me.
The small grins on our faces tells it all.
This was in my stripe faze
and even though it is 90 degrees outside,
I wear a long sleeve shirt.
The sun sets and we are under the porch roof.
Darkness surrounds us,
and I sometimes imagine imaginary things around us
like small creatures hiding in the back,
or memories of us hiding in the clouds.
If you look close enough into our eyes,
you can see the little kids we use to be peeking through.
The only light you can make out in the picture
is the sparkles in our eyes.
I was scared to leave again.
She was like my comfort blanket.
You can tell I was nervous from the blurriness of the photo,
but I blame it on the harsh wind
that was never there that day.

Dernière Danse

One day, we will look at the moon together,
 and I will fall in love with you because you will say that
 the man in the moon has a wife
 who wants to go to Paris every month
 so he gives her a bucket full of moonlight
 so she can find her way back in the dark vastness of space
 only to take back what he misses the most from Earth—
 a dozen choux à la crèmes
 but she eats them all on her way
 and leaves a trail of crumbs in the sky like stars
 sometimes they fall to the earth like snow
Dans tout Paris, je m'abandonne
Et je m'envole, vole, vole, vole, vole

The next day, we will sit by the lake, running our hands in the water,
 and I will continue to love you because you will say that
 the sky sends love letters to the lady in the lake
 asking to meet her behind the trees
 so she sprays perfume behind her ears
 which spreads like clouds around her when she steals away,
 her robes swirling around her
 and sometimes she moves so fast
 that we can feel her passing by in the wind
Je remue le ciel, le jour, la nuit
Je danse avec le vent, la pluie

Then, we will sit by the fireplace, under the same blanket
 and I will love you forever, because you will tell me
 that fireplaces were parts of the sun left behind
 with the earth after they had danced
 their last dance which the earth brings out so that
 the sun can remember what it was like to be loved
 and to love and wonder when they will dance again
Écoute comme mon cœur est immense
Je suis une enfant du monde

Teeth-Gritted Smiles

The voice of my uncle wafts through my kitchen
like carbon monoxide.

He heads directly to me first, stands so close
I see a drop of sweat roll off his nose
and into the pot.

It sears in the boiling water.
“What’s cookin’?” he asks me,
not bothering to ask how I am
since he hasn’t seen me in two years.
Aturdir.

I let him look,
only offering a teeth-gritted smile in response,
hoping that they’ll break off
and clatter to the tile floor,
so I won’t have to talk to him.

He reaches for the spoon
in my hand, takes over. I watch as he stirs,
turning the macaroni noodles
into mush against the rims.
He tells me I’m going to make a great wife some day.
Aturdir.

I want to look him dead in the eyes
and tell him I am not his chef.
Nor am I his maid,
nor am I someone he can control.

Instead, I let the words skim down
my back with sweat.
Aturdir.

Perhaps it’s the metal of the spoon,
or the sweat, or the stench of my uncle protruding from his pores,
but when my family and I gather for dinner,

the macaroni and cheese tastes different.
It tastes like metal auditorium chairs and cloth napkins.
This is not what home tastes like.

The Act of Scratching Your Head Because You're Lost

My dad lives in Pana Po'o,
where fatigues inhabit bedroom back closets
and his kids are tucked away in utility belts.

He drives us to Pena Ajena,
brings a twelve pack of Coke in the trunk
just for himself.
Shoves his mouth full of road maps,
to cough them up,
passing community colleges.

Directions turn him into an overheated engine,
slams his feet on the gas
to watch me flinch.
As he gets out,
I dig the seat belt from my gut.
My stomach slides through my teeth,
so I vomit up old rubber and broken dishes.

He's burned his lungs to the filter,
flicking ashes on the hood.
He addresses me in
that "I've done it again" voice.
The one that feels like heat waves off asphalt,
twenty degrees out.

He walks over to a dingy rest stop
and buys me a Coke.

Harsh Goodbyes

From the letter's perspective, it probably seemed a little mean.

After all, it had been through quite the journey. Like all things, it had to be born. Well, not all things—I suppose rocks aren't born, nor ink, nor the letter. So maybe conceived is the better word, the ink and the paper and the sentiment all had to be conceived and come together, a mishmash Frankenstein of office supplies and lies. After this culmination, it had to travel to get to me, around 680 miles. So, the U.S. Post had to get involved, in addition to the envelope and stamp—more and more innocents being dragged into the delivery. Upon its arrival, I was disgusted.

Not because of the contents, at the time. But the font—*Harlow Solid Italic*. Despite this unfortunate birth defect, the letter enjoyed a few months spent in the sunlight of my desk. The letter didn't know it did anything wrong when it was torn from its spot and crumpled up and pitched into the darkness. It was from that darkness of a closed and rarely opened drawer I found the letter months later.

Upon the initial rediscovery, I was almost tempted to read the letter, although the font was deterrence on its own. I certainly wasn't going to keep it—as innocent as the paper and ink were, their existence was warped now, corrupted, carriers of deceit.

I contemplated a number of ways to murder the letter.

Scissors, maybe? To cut you to shreds and disregard you for the whole you once were?

Ooh, or a shredder, the same result, but without the human touch.

Uniform, mechanical, not worth dirtying my hands over.

Looking at the font again, I felt myself get angry, like a science experiment gone wrong, the sudden violent reaction bubbling over the beaker, a result of negligence and far too much volatile compound in one vessel than sane. As I completed the murder, the signature peeks out at me from the page, “Your love, Your Life, Your ████” and then

there was nothing that would have been a good enough death for this letter

but burning it would have to do.

I stood in the cold with a matchbook and I thought it'd be harder to get the matches to light to destroy this last piece of [redacted] but even though my hands shook it caught [redacted]

[redacted] never felt [redacted] burn [redacted] letter [redacted]

Watch [redacted] print [redacted] thought substituted [redacted] curse [redacted] black [redacted] black [redacted] small [redacted] fall [redacted] snow [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

No More Heroes Here

The shards dig into my elbow, drawing crimson droplets.
“Oops.”

It’s such a simple word, but carries such a big connotation.
I can’t possibly understand what you mean.

No more heroes here.

We don’t need something so pointless.

Heroes lead to recklessness and that leads to broken glass.

I shouldn’t have punched that girl at the playground,
even if she was pushing that little boy around.

Now the glass is broken and my elbow stings.

You’re in my face, telling me not to just sit by.

With my lip quivering, all I can say is:

“No more heroes here.”

Pointless to come running.

Mind your own business.

I too once wanted to be a hero.

But instead, I’m just a little girl with a broken portrait.

Catch & Release

The commute to campus is harrowing.
Regularity and fatigue draining energy,
the faucets of my eyes expelling their light.
Withdrawn, head down—I look beyond
the ground. Bus stop bus stop bus stop,
I am unable to hear the music in my ears,
nauseated, and like a dog wrestling
with a choke collar, my throat chafes.
I swear with this clench in my jaw
I'll lose the softness in my mouth
someday. I prepare my placid, unfeeling
face and sink into my phone screen,
slink onto the bus, not without effort;
vibrating with dissatisfaction. Too much
light, too many voices, faces, swimming
with fatigue, everything is...
I pull my feet up onto the bus seat
and tug in a deep breath, close my eyes.
I have forgotten how to see, how
to live with ease. I remember I forgot—
remind myself of the necessity of vision.
In my peripheral I watch someone
smile. For a moment I retreat from
my angry corner, unfurrow my brows,
recall that I can be opened
like a gift, if I'm patient. I know
my closed off stone hard heart cavity well,
but it's not the only thing inside.
I know I'd rather sublimate
stone to a sticky, warm breeze.

To Surface

Oh, I love
riding the bus.
Every day I slide in
and slide out,
my only chance
to surface for air
in each six to five day
of drowning.
But

What's one morning's cool water is the next evening's static on TV.
Those days it's staring at a white-gray sky until your temples crack,
right before you smell the rain but after you mourn the sun;
those days it's trying to sleep on a turbulent plane with your head bent sideways
against the plexiglass,
while the crowd gurgles nonsense;
those days it's suffocating in melted plastic;
those days it's just trying to stay inside your hoodie while They scream and run
free and argue
aggressively and beat dead horses and nudge and mutter and shudder
uncontrollably.
They move back and forth in rhythmless waves, crashing into each other
endlessly;
those days the bus driver grimaces;
those days it's migraines,
though I try to drown myself,
gulping and gulping and gulping for water.

My headphones are broken. My sweatshirt's too hot. My phone's dead.
My T-shirt's too cold. My computer's too risky to take out on my bus.
My skin is so dry. My eyes ache. Every opinion makes my fingers hurt
from clenching. They won't just shut up.

Yet where They are backwards They are compelling.

I always listen
to what They say.
What else can I do?

So, I surface and embrace Them.

I'm not running home to summertime, enlightenment, and a studio to cocoon in.

I'm not a butterfly.

I listen...why conform to that angry white-clouded headache that we are all
guilty of listening to in
drowning

if I pride myself on innate euphoria.

My name is Kunga Gyatso.

My name means All-Joyous Ocean.

I am of content and bliss.

The leaves rush by outside
in golden and crimson.