Ancestry

The old men I know 
are obsessed with hands, 
callouses screeched 
around their knuckles like tinfoil 
challenging you to bite back

make like hyena, anteater, black bear 
body script filled for a fighting chance. 
Consumed, lavishing the violet haze 
of tainted spliffs and Prince,

their eyes — dead ringer 
assassins tying chains 
like boy scouts — trained 
against the ceiling fan,

pulsing alarm clock 
over nothing. But they clamor, 
cannibalistic drawls 
begging for reverence

as if old leather was worth wearing 
for its wisdom.

Remember the amber summers, 
remember gripping into skin 
like toilet paper, reaching for absolution 
between brown bottles and empty rollers,

foolhardy and violent, blissless bodies 
thrashing and caged. 
Burning oak trees,

stubborn and sutured forestry, 
crushing bark into your hollowed stumps,
and growing boys from the ashes.

He Dies

in the third degree
fingers clutching the ends
of a photo, tattooed
with his sons birth.

of his own vices
liver choking
on reckless and afraid conversations.

by a hundred hands
with respect for his honor
and theres
in reconcile
with the family he hurt.

cheaply, empty.

because it is easy.
because there is no labor in death.

and the long road is awkward and splintered,
we are left to walk the miles he found emasculating
until we are nothing but pyres
eager to burn his shadow into the asphalt.

Over Years and Overnight

My dear sanity, I have misplaced you among the shatters and clanks
of dutch oven lids against baby blue cast irons hanging from the sagging rotted pegboard in
that old kitchen. You lie next to me, velvet whispers tied into streamers hanging above the
dalmatian speckled tile that feels like gravel against our backs. Do you remember
that night we walked in bare footed, half-lunged and wide awake, to the hush of a thousand
wings and darting eyes clinging to the rooftop. The memory of their shadows is still imprinted onto the ceiling light.

You are a wanderer, splint leg made walking cane, peddler of cautionary tales and makeshift moonlight seances. To be with you is unstable, you shake like the river below the pipe bridge I was once told me not to jump on. This place means something to some people I once longed to meet some people, not over breaking bridges, but to beg to anything besides pews waiting to be knelt on, to be anything but a waiting body desperately searching for something to make space for.

Yet, I have claimed this land without you. I have forced my refuge through clenched teeth and shredded skin, lips bursting like moths in early June. You are not the only thing dying in the first heat of summer. There is no need to search between the reams of paper on my father’s desk, nor the bottom of the oil lamps he left behind, I’ve made char of them and told the ashes to leave forgotten.

So now my dear sanity, sleep peacefully, without need for the hum of car engines to lull you past the night terrors, without fear of calloused hands and knuckled grips, without a need to know the difference. Ride down the sidewalk, weaving your baby blue schwinn underneath driveways and in between fence posts. Don’t find yourself crying into paint cans, metal splinters in your knees, ride on instead, keep your hands where you can hold them. Yellow eye, watch me, burn these irises between your retinas and dream of my body wrapped in satin when you lay down to sleep.

Forever,

Yours

Two Step

Let’s paint the world in sepia tonight, dug up from the dirt of bare knuckle boxing matches. Pull your fists from the mud red sand and let them drag along the pavement.

Color these sidewalks in chalk lined afterburn leaving scorch marks where the telephone poles once shone like night lights to dye the foggy afternoons tangerine. Scrape your brethren from their carpet fibers, gather them in dust pans and watch them fly like grappling pirate hooks.
latching onto the next morning breeze. I breathe with them,

the two stepping March men, hands tangled like undergrowth.
We bloodlet the daisies to paint the sky, bring with us
the changing of seasons, cycle of rebirth, the felling of tyrants.

Without penchant for the day cycle, rise and grow out of autumn leaves
reflected in rain puddles burning forests in the wake of summer. Feel the
heat against your back as you watch it’s shadow fall in front of you.

Forget me not

Sketched from vistages
of hangnails
and dead lips,
skin tag
road marks
mingling with
yellow bruises
and kp
scars,

overturned joints
and wrapped ligaments
find their way,
like anxiety,
trapped between
the gasps
in your throat.

Nerves,
squelched
pinched
crimson
into violet
into gold,
squeezing between
jagged
veneers,
imprints
printing reminders
along the creases
of your hips,

between the folds
you’ve forgotten,
taut skin
and wrinkles,
pushing
and pulling
in familiar
rhythm.

A distasteful memory,
the gnawing,
grind of
perspiration,
trippant
desperation,
inebriated on
nightshades
and melted wax,

heavy handed
breathes

dripping
as they
find their way to the carpet,

leaving
dirty,
but
unscarred.