

for spring

The arrival of spring is the closest thing to a miracle I have experienced in the past 21 years. I am endlessly bemused by the way people emerge from home-spun cocoons, where they have hibernated the winter away.

This season of abundance never fails to startle me awake, to jolt me out from the monotone lull of winter skies. The larks in the trees whistle their sweet melodies and for the first time I surface from the cavern of my bedroom wholly human. No gray-cast lingers underneath my eyes, I am light-footed & light-hearted once again, no longer downtrodden with the miseries of this wretched thing we call life.

I marvel at the crowded bushes of hyacinths perfuming the sweet morning air, and how these fresh blooms sway, heavy under the weight of the morning dew. And how plentiful are the daffodils lining the side of the highway! Their sunshine-hued petals luminous in the morning light, so jubilant in defiance of the winters that have held them underground for months upon months.

There is a decadence to the air these days. Every shattered and discarded flower petal, every t-shirt-weather-morning, every drop of dew collected on the windowsill is to be preserved. Pickled and canned for the days when winter's cold air grows suffocating.

I let the sunshine soak into my bones and

imagine draping myself in fresh
wisteria blooms & decorating
the ringlets of my hair with crocus buds
& lining the bottoms of my
pockets with handfuls of fragrant lilac
in some feeble attempt at prolonging
this precious season.

boyhood

dancing to the soundtrack of ice cream truck jingles/mouth-puckeringly-sour
lemonade stands on Saturday afternoons/cannonballs and sprinting across
the deck at the pool, then biking home with eyes stained crimson from the
sting of chlorine/bellies full and aching from fresh baked chocolate chip
cookies/inhaling popsicle after popsicle, giddy from the sugar rush and
the delectable freedom of being young/scowling at limp green beans
draped across your dinner plate/digging a hole 'all the way to China'
in your mother's petunia patch/skin and hair slick
with sweat/climbing trees until your palms are sticky with sap and burned
red from the roughened bark/bloody knees and crescent moons
of dirt permanently stamped beneath fingernails/wondering when
you will ever feel this free again and understanding the answer is "never"

shaky jack-o-lantern smiles and new backpacks
for the first day of school/pretending you are ready to
grow up & grow old/still [foolishly] believing that getting older
means getting wiser & stronger/losing milk teeth,
gaining a gap-toothed sense of confidence/pinching bugs
between your fingers and grinding them beneath the soles
of your sneakers/muscles sore and bones aching from the
craving to grow tall/turning around to see that the summer
and your youth have passed you by
(for it is always summer when you are a boy)

girlhood

padlocked diaries trimmed in faux fur from the school book fair/your most intimate secrets scrawled across the page in glitter gel pen/scratchy tulle gowns and plastic tiaras, rhinestones long lost to the abyss between sofa cushions/dressing up as a princess only to indulge in the fantasy of ruling a kingdom/steeping brown m&m candies in water for high tea with a cavalcade of stuffed animals/sprinting away from boys at recess with earthworms held in outstretched palms/freckled cheeks, skin sunburnt and hair wild/tan lines hidden beneath sundress straps/a string of pearls tightened around your neck/lipstick smeared across mouths and cheeks and teeth

knowing that being called a girl is the worst kind of playground punishment/stiff collars growing suffocating in the sweltering early September heat/waking up with fresh blood spilled between your thighs and soaking into your sheets/struck by the violence of the transition from girl to woman/bottling thunderstorms in your ribcage, nestling them behind your lungs/they call you a witch, but watch in wonder as you conduct lightning through your spine

say a prayer for your tongue, swollen and burnished from swallowing back your words/then, tip your head back and swallow the swords they left hanging over you