

I Was Told There Would Be Trampolines

A man leapt from the eighty-fourth floor, arms folded back like a V of geese. And though the cameras never caught the Rorschach splatter of his body, I imagine the ground swelled up to catch him. He merely accepted that we were never meant to fly, that sometimes people cannot move trampolines fast enough to catch us all. Before she kept sleeping pills on her bedside table, my mother and I peered in death's maw, believing not that flight was too temporary, but sleep too uncertain. She often asked that I check on her as she slept, just to make sure she was still alive. Not until a caravan of Kuwaiti men ran her off a desert road did she associate sand with saffron, honey-spice with triumph, and finally uttered the words *I am tired of fighting*. Eventually, she will find where I hide her pills, but for now, let her night terrors volunteer themselves to her trembling hands. Only more time to remember how to dial nine-one-one. And I'm sure I can recall how to find a pulse. I'm sure I can assimilate her back into the habit of living.

1993

It almost sounds like the beginning

of a bad joke:

two monks meditate

in an orchard: yes:

only one notices

a pair of squirrels

approaching each other in a careful

rodent way, paws combing

the maple shag of fur, and imperfection

welcomed. For a moment,

though they have renounced impure thoughts,

both monks believe there are no squirrels

but two

strangers

tangled in the shallow

depths of human curiosity: yes:

my parents

were once so curious about each other,

they made love

on a twin-sized bed

in October,

but even a monk would

agree that I cannot complain about

being an accident: maybe: understand

that my parents once lived in

somnambulant romance. And call me a fool

for believing they loved each other, that

before seeing the composite him-and-her

portraiture of my face, they could not realize

the misery of attachment: here's

another joke:

my father pulls

a calendar from a bin underneath his bed, flips

through the pages, each month

a picture of me and two people I wish

had loved a little longer. To think, in the first

year of my life, I was not wrong: punch line:

asking what happened between them, he says *I don't*

like to think about it.

One monk laughs,

and suddenly, he cannot incur

the om of squirrels,

nothing left but flowers

of fur, something

newborn amongst

the roots of the lychee

tree.

I am unsure

of the gravity of my existence: yes:

and the squirrels, they have abandoned curiosity: yes:

If one would just admit *We fell out of love,*

then there can be no more talk of ritual, same

unanswered story falsified from

their lips: listen: father cannot stop singing

the same sandpaper chords his throat carried

for her.

It's only

out of habit.

Crossing McBee and Main

Crossing McBee and Main, a boy lies dead in the crosswalk,
face down underneath the mural of a mango tree. Days like
these, I wonder about God, if, this time, the shepherd has

misplaced his flock, and everything can start swell, everything
except the belly of the dead boy. Passersby move around
him like ellipses, and since ambulances don't sing for the dead,

here's a story: I once let a Harper twin feel me up behind
the gym, listened as he groaned in my ear, before insisting
that he be the one to leave first. So often, I have read about

omnipotent eyes, and call me a blasphemer—that thought
will lead somewhere—but it feels as if no one likes to watch
anymore. Now, there's a dead boy in the street, and I can

still feel the slide of the Harper twin's thumb underneath
my breast. Divine clockmaker, I am no deist, but please oil
these rusted cogs. I'm no good at bargains, tell me, if I

pretended to know nothing of you, if I just lay beside the boy
would you return? I'll never feel comfortable around another
man, but promise, that when the ambulance arrives in its scarlet

vibrato, when the EMT mistakes me for just another body,
promise you will teach me to never sleep. I think I can
understand your wandering sometimes, to rest on the balls of your

feet and observe our diaspora like a shaken ant farm, though
sometimes, and you must understand, we don't know where
to go, and simply pulse in place until you reach your hand in us again.