

Poetry Collection

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White Clover

We make chain necklaces,
wrap the stems around the base of the petals,
and trade.

We could do this for hours
until the sun is a sleepy eye,
drowsy on the horizon.
Mel and I sit cross-legged
in a field of white clover;
We let the trees listen in
as we give and take chains,
give and take stories.
The trees, they yearn for hands instead of swatches,
soft hair instead of leaves,
and feet that can carry them
far from their roots.
Mel and I let them have some of our stories,
the ones we can control.
Let them keep on whispering,
what a wonderful life it must be, for those pretty little girls.

The ugly things, the things left unsaid,
we wrap their stems around the base of the petals
and trade.

Five Times Over

The morning after she left the first time,
it rained. The driveway was vacant
of everything but a puddle of rainbow oil
and an earthworm crawling
millimeter by millimeter
towards the mud.
My brother told me that
worms, they have five hearts
in a line down their bodies.
He told me this a few days ago,
while slicing one in half with dad's pocket knife.
The worm didn't bleed very much.
Well, worms. Both pieces wriggled.
Infant-worms, forced to grow all over again.

The morning she left, I used a stick
to poke the worm from the driveway to the grass

and whispered:

“Can I have one of your hearts...?”

But before I could say please,
the earthworm slid into the mud.

He and his five hearts going one by one
into the ground. He probably uses them
to love the whole world all at once.

If I had five hearts, I would save each one for later.
That way, even if mom left and broke the old one,
even if I died one, two, three, four times,
on the day she comes home
I'd have an extra in my pocket to love her.

So Much and Nothing

Over the breakfast table,
we gaze
at our sections of the morning paper,
eyes caked with crusty leftovers
from our dreams.

Black coffee,
heavy in my throat,
scorches like the echoes
of all the things
I shouldn't have said.

My darling. No—
love. No,
darling:
sitting on the other side
of the table,
lying on the other side
of the bed,
resting in your armchair
on the other side
of the world,

“pass the sugar?”

You turn the page
of the sports section
and kiss the lips
of the coffee mug.
I sigh loudly,
but the score reports
seem to have
captured your attention
in ways I never could.
I reach over the
hot mugs and cold cereal
to grab the sugar bowl.

Your silence settles
into a film over my lips:

there's so much
and nothing left
to say.
Once breakfast is finished,
you leave for work,
only remembering to say goodbye
with your wedding ring hand on the doorknob
and your back to me.
The kiss you keep for yourself
leaves my lips
slightly parted,
my breath
slightly stolen,
but only just so.

I abandon the dirty dishes
and trudge back to our bedroom,
to crawl underneath
icy bed sheets,

fantasizing
about the day
we will finally
remember
how to speak,
with some conviction,
those three words
(my darling).

Oak Trees

Her eyes go on for miles. Two muddy trails
cradled in a forest of oak
that beckon for me to follow,
yet warn me to stay away all the same.

Trees murmur softly as I approach,
ugly things, spiteful things,
before hushing one another as I pass.

I find my sister on the banks of a wide brown lake,
hands gripping the grass
as she leans over the water's edge.

We study her reflection:
the face is distorted, rippling
as if it were about to yell,
the body carries its chest in folded arms,
hugs its shoulders

like they might wash away.

I plunge my hands into the water,
hoping to drag her back onto solid ground.

They come out empty,
green with algae.

Lake water splashes angrily on the banks.
Cattails hiss in my direction: I am not welcome.

The trees close around her, push me away,
until I'm back outside,
searching for the face I know.

I'm standing on the edge of an empty field,
locked out by two gated eyes,
hands dripping stains on my white sweater.

Relieve

I remember my name now.
The one that moved wind chimes,
made them dance Swan Lake.
The one that made golden wheat bend.
The one you
stole and sent floating
downstream, like driftwood.

I chased it along the riverbanks,
trying to capture it in my ear
just one last time.
But it never came back,
retreating instead into a purple sunset,
to a place I could not follow.

But I can remember
the way it tasted in my mouth:
cool peaches in the summertime,
juice running down my chin
like thick, sweet tears.