

Stretch Marks

My skin has grown too big
I wear it like a baggy shirt,
two sizes too much.

I leave it on the nightstand, when I sleep
with the other half-dirty things
that I'll wear again tomorrow.

Tailor it, you say?
I've tried, but I'm tired
of the sucking in and stitching up,
I'm stuck full of holes
from the poking and prodding of pins.

Thread can't hold me together.

So I spin heat cycles on repeat
with hope that one day
hot to touch
that skin will have shrunk just enough
to fit me snug.

that's good because if

is the latest text
my father has sent.

I probably do not
need to state this
but he is 78.
Fingers labor
over a flip phone

approaching puberty
in human years.
He texts me again
to start over
and finish his thought.

Is this the message
I will receive
from him someday?

Half-finished
as his heart thud-thuds

or his brain
decides it had better SEND
before he takes a long nap?

Will I, like him,
hold this phone
for years

when its functions fade
and it is slow to charge
so I can read his last missives

the way he kept
his phone

so he could read
the final words
of his grandson

or listen
to a voice mail
from his mother
one more time?

The Origin

White heat of a fleeting moment
under the Caribbean sun.
Whisked into the blue, pulsing life force
of a primordial saga
from which we—and all—
began.
Our beating hearts and brittle white bones
like evolutionary relics,
evidence of our uncanny divergence
from the age-old ancestor,
from the ones who came before,
from the beginning.
Our needy lungs
and slow, land-roving feet
both tethered to our existential purpose—
unfriendly to the original blue brine
that moves the moon.
Even the trees,
shedding their roots in long vines,
belong to others—
background to the monkey
and the fauna
and the bird.
All actors on this ancient,
interwoven orb
where the sun's touch can kiss or burn.
Until the velvet black falls heavy,
and all is swallowed by the quiet
and the still.

Galloping in the Water

My sister loves the sharks, my dad likes the sting rays,
My mom and I love the seahorses, on our aquarium days!
I read books about these beautiful, amazing creatures
That have so many fun and interesting features.

Seahorses get their name from their horse-like heads
Some of them live among the seagrass beds.
They like to eat plankton and crustaceans that drift by
A seahorse baby is called a fry.

Within corals and reefs, seahorses can blend in
They come in many colors - red, orange, and even vermillion!
A herd is the name of a seahorse group
Their tails used to grasp objects are shaped like a loop.

Seahorses have fins like fish, that help them swim
But they don't have scales, instead they have skin.
Seahorse dads have a pouch in which the moms lay the eggs
Once hatched they have a bent spine - no stomach, and no legs.

Yes, seahorses are fun and a wonderful sight
It was nice to read facts about it, right?
Electric eel is another creature that really interests me
After I read more, I will write another poem. Maybe!

Monkey Snack

Skinny yellow
Bold and bright
Spots of brown
That's alright
Peels like ease
Grows on trees
Now you see
I'm talking about
A banana please

Sunlight Winds

The water shines,
As the sunlight winds.
The water is crystal clear,
As it all started with one tear.

Dear Music,

From the moment I entered this world and my heart beat like a drum, I
could feel you inside me, a glittering star.

From the second I could talk, I was singing, dancing, in love with you.
Each song, one repeated word or phrase, turned into real, flowing
music.

Now that it's been 11 great years, I've realized how far you can
take me. I've realized all the journeys and adventures we've been on.
And when sometimes it's been a rocky road, we paved the way
together.

No matter where in the world I am, you follow me with a land of
opportunities and a welcoming smile. You are one of the most diverse
things on the planet. There are pieces of you for everyone.

Whether you're an instrument or a voice, an opera or a musical,
I'll always love you. When there comes a song I don't particularly like,
you don't mind. You know that it's not anything against you.

When there aren't words to say, you fill the awkward silence with
emotion. You pull me back up when I've fallen.
I want to let you know that even when my hearing fades, your song
will still echo in my heart, in my mind, and in my soul and I will never
lose my burning desire to love you just the way you are.

Today, Tomorrow

Every night I lie in bed
thinking about what I said
Was I kind enough to my friends
up until the school days end.
Will my day tomorrow be great
or will it be a worser fate
I hope that I make the right choice
and speak kind words with my voice.

What makes me human?

Is it perhaps that I am breathing
Or maybe the fact that I am seeing
What we have done to the world
Which seems to feel like a stabbing knife
Is it my muscles
That keeps shoving me forward
Through the situations of life

Or maybe in fact my heart
That keeps my blood pumping
Through my veins
It may as well be my emotions
Since it feels like that's all I use

In fact what makes me human
Is my ability to forever be imperfect
And nothing I will ever do can change that
I could solve all the world's problems
I and still be deemed imperfect

No matter what
Being human and living
Poses the challenge of always
Wanting to be perfect
In the public eyes

What is perfect anyways
What persons opinion created what perfect means
Because perfect can mean so many things
In others eyes

Being human
Means you are
Constantly fighting
The definition of perfect

After The Viet Nam War: A Post Card

The largest card in the pharmacy for sale.

I purchase and send it home with this message.

This card forces me to write down
the fire of my memory.

I say only what is necessary.

My dear Sir:

The Government has said the war is complete.

Officially I am on my way to the place that loved me.

The good memories are held solidly there:

The warm days of love-making,

The pick-nicking in the woods.

The country you sent me to crush was lovely.

Everything I saw had a tinge of sorrow attached

And we torched it all to ash.

I remember a young girl weeping over her burned flesh.

She may have been a woman I might have recognized at home.

The fore-bombs had eaten away her clothes and she was naked.

I turned my eyes away.

I gave her the privacy she deserved.

She is still walking on that road.

She is a photograph. It is filed away in my memory.

All the temples are demolished.

There is no place to ask for or request forgiveness.

This memory is placed in a sacred place in my mind.

And every letter from home my mother ended with

Come on Home Boy, My Lord Come On Home!

Ceramic Lamb

My sister told me how my father recalled once - just once -
How his uncle made a ceramic lamb
And placed it in the coffin of his little brother

His father, I knew, spent time in prison,
but I did not know why.

That day, I found out that he had three brothers,
Not the two I had always known about:

The one who went to prison, then wrapped himself
around a telephone pole when he was twenty-five
(Whose wallet my father kept,
stained with blood)

The other who beat his wife while drinking himself
to death-inspired stupors until his addled eyes darkened
(Whose children now were criminals,
or prisoners of other failures)

But somewhere in Mercer County, probably outside Chickasaw
Lies a coffin with a ceramic lamb

With the body that is still buried
Deep inside my father's heart
As he pushes the world away.

Drought

There was a drought that year,
the summer my brother had the amputation.
First his foot, then the rest of the leg, not long after-
weak and damaged veins
no longer able to deliver blood,
even his, thin as it was,
as far as it was needed.
My garden lay parched and neglected
those long, hot months,
brown spots growing
first on the outer bracts of leaves
slowly spreading from one to the next.
Leaves on the tomato plants
-my garden favorite-
yellowing, then turning brown and lifeless.
I plucked them off gently and with sadness,
Watching day after day as vines grew tough and
yellow blossoms failed to thrive until I
– determined not to let them die –
snipped and cut off all the brown,
tugged and pulled whole branches,
destroying all the rot
until at last I sagged onto the dusty ground
beside a heaping pile of useless limbs,
and prayed for rain.

Blue Light and Sunlight

There are colors all around us. Blues and reds and greens.
They are found in flowers, grass, sky, and trees,
But also found on the screens.
The beauty of the world escapes us,
Because of the buttons, dings, and chimes.
Blue light can tear us away from sunlight.
Phones bring us apart from the beauty and mystique,
Computers separate us from the freedom of endless green,
T.V.s try to show us different parts of our world through a camera's lense,
But why do we need a camera lense to see the adventures we are missing?
Why not do it ourselves?
Venture into the unknown and see remarkable things,
Vibrant red pandas, bounding leopards, enormous whales, tall giraffes and soaring
toucans.
Climbing monkeys, roaring lions, slick foxes, and hungry hippos.
Green trees can set us free,
From the worry and hurry in our everyday lives.
Fields of yellow grass, hills of vibrant purple flowers,
The bright blue sky, butterflies the colors of dreams,
Can make us feel alive again.
Big and small, it's all there for us, we just have to find it.
So instead of cowering behind screens, let go plant flowers,
Let's go climb mountains, explore the jungle, and scuba dive.
Do anything that will truly make us feel alive.

The World is Cruel and Mean

A little girl sits on the steps of a little house on Newham Street
Her shoes are pink.
But the lights on the cop car are blue and red.
And they flash, leaving dots in her vision.
The world is cruel and mean.

A little girl sits on her bed in another little house.
A statue of Santa on her nightstand.
As she wishes for her mommy to come home.
The world is cruel and mean.

A little girl picks walnut after walnut off the ground of the woods.
One by one they go in the bucket.
Until the woman comes out and dumps all out.
The world is cruel and mean.

A little girl smiles at two parents.
They are not her own.
But they tell her pretty things.
“We love you.”
“We want you.”
The world is cruel and mean.

A not so little girl smiles at a new set of parents.
They tell her pretty things too.
But this time is different.
They say those pretty things,
But this time, they feel true.
Maybe the world is not so cruel and mean.

A girl walks with her sisters into a cold hospital.
The tiles are white, speckled with glittering stones here and there.
She squeezes her dad’s hand.
And sobs when he doesn’t squeeze back.
The world is cruel and mean.

A girl struggles to hold her family together.
Struggles to hold herself together.
She cries.
She smiles.
She cries again.
The world is cruel and mean.

Who are you?

I am a child, not a daughter.

I am a sibling, not a sister.

A they, not a she.

I am NOT a girl.

I am a person, not a threat to society.

I am a broken china doll, cracked,

Worth so much but just thrown into a closet,

a box, while I am expected to stay there,

Silent,

Like the ones before me who fell and forgot to get back up.

Like the ones who didn't speak in fear of bleeding out like the ones on the street,

Like the ones who were forced into hiding away in fear of being taken from their lives,

Their identities are gone.

Like the ones who changed themselves to have a foundation strong enough to hold the weight of the lies.

Like the ones who slowly bleed every night.

Like the ones who try to stop the hurt and cut their woes away.

Like the ones.

And still, the question presses,

Who are you?

I am someone who doesn't feel like I am enough,

Like someone who is giving their all but not giving enough,

Like they are the villain in their skin,

Like I am a lost soul, drifting from mind to mind, trying to find the right fit,

The right body,

The right mind.

But who are you?

I am a sibling, a child.

A they, a human.

I am a friend.

A gay person, a trans one, a non-binary,

I am valid no matter who I love and what pronoun suits my fancy.

I am a person who can be devastated and depressed but who can still find joy.

I am a person who doesn't have to carry the weight of all the bad things and people that have hurt me.

I can drop that weight and still be valid as a person

Who are you?

Myself.