

Lost Monuments

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Monuments boyhood crashed

We are only as tall
as the fraction
on the face of your watch.

How did we start and end like this—
so small we never crossed the same street
then too long to fit within the borders
of even one photograph?

I have stopped to think of the hours falling,
monuments boyhood crashed
through glass cabinets,
the shards like a net catching angles
of doodle-riddled notes, a Hawaiian downpour,
poems you didn't like, hell peppers on crumpled napkins.

Our exile stretched deserts of
classrooms and basketball courts.
Sitting outside on the wooden benches
where the sidelines felt like the sole stanza
that could make us bear to smile.
We emerged not scarless, shared only
the riots of ideas whittling growing bodies.

Do you remember chocolate on rooftops?
Not a line from "My Favorite Things"
but a wordless contract the moment agreed on.
I thought the rain you often wished for
would drench us then; I find that only
spots of dryness could make us gargoyles.

The killing art

The portrait of a teeming lake is rendered
with a shaking brush,
a grasped, trembling knife in the other.
A bladed shadow shivers over
the brilliance of acrylic or thin oil.

Blue visage teases eyes with diamonds—
Dark water, its underbelly barely
a rumor of sharks.

The room is a witness to a rotting
blankness. Still the reflected scene
cannot satisfy in its vastness—
slowly, ever slowly will waves curl
like a frightened cat with a rounded back,
paw by paw away
from the meteoric scratching.

Our city divided

The pedestrians knew of the cityscape dividing
when they pointed to the clothesline that stretched
from your roof deck to my yard.

On a night of rain,
water strung the pearls delicately in ways
your weight would send the slightest shudders
across that line
but I had only imagined your message;
a grandfather walking by covered his head
for fear of falling fruit.

If birds were to make their homes here,
then we have offered them a sullen sea.
Who marks their territories in this manner?

We forced the burden of a lost culture upon ourselves—
the invention of a spinning wheel does not travel unopposed.
We laid down its tracks when we did not cut
our devotion to the diagonals, slicing space between us.
Too often have we cried out, for the gift of comprehending
how an infinity of points could determine anything.

Will I wait for another storm to greet the chimes
hanging from your balcony window?
I have shouted to the drivers below,
they can explain which routes are still passable.

Maybe you can hang a white shirt then.

Island

How can I tell you what had transpired:
when I was almost flying in the sky
with only a cloth as thin as an eyelid,
billowing behind me like capes
of superheroes we used to talk about;

how the shadow cast on the sea below
looked like a donut,
but it would be more poetic
if I told you that it was
the black pupil of a piercing iris,
azure folding on itself,
making the littlest parasail wings;

how it could have been the eye
of a colossal monster of Greek myth,
rising soon to take me
in its slippery palm and claim
a stolen eyelid, the churning
in my stomach yearning to join
the water's own;

how I was swimming against
a tangerine horizon. Sunset
rays fell across like the highest
church rafters built of stained glass,
but had somehow found me.
The time we rinsed in a receding tide
pulled away like the sailboats
retiring into the rarest night;

how I am leaving this island now
and when the plane takes off,
it will shake, an almighty thundering
that never reaches the whitest sands,
but it will not break,
it never does.