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My Ribcage Makes Eye Contact

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MY RIBCAGE MAKES EYE CONTACT

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MY RIBCAGE MAKES EYE CONTACT

POEMS

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Shelley Valdez and the 2018 editors of *Santa Clara Review*, who before my time with them published the original version of “The Convincing” in volume 105, issue 2. “Falling Back Into Orbit After Visiting A Place of Doom” and “Lips Part And” are included in its Editors’ Showcase of volume 107, issue 2. “Psalm 151, The Warmth I Offer Myself,” will be found on the Academy of American Poets website, poets.org, for its selection in the 2020 Tamara Verga Poetry Prize. I gratefully acknowledge all those who have affirmed and published these poems.

The two words I would like to resound most loudly when all my utterances converge at the end of my life are “thank you.” I am thankful to the international (and frankly intergalactic) ecosystem in which I live and connect in body and spirit, which has made both me and the words that press upon my heart possible. I have been grown and deepened and loved immensely, and I give all my gratitude to the group effort that is life. The family which makes up this ecosystem expanded and flourished at Santa Clara University, and I have many people to thank. First and foremost, Dr. Kirk Glaser, my mentor for this project and someone I know will be a lifelong friend—thank you for blessing me with so much, with your constantly careful and honest editorial eyes, with your encouragement and overwhelming support, with raw conversations that deepen the life within me, with the tender push I needed to step into my poet shoes. I would not be the poet or person I am without you, and count my lucky stars that I was gifted a teacher as special as you. To the Canterbury committee, who took a chance on me to fund and back this project—these pages definitely wouldn’t exist without you and this extraordinary opportunity. Thank you. To my mother, Nijolé, whose artist-philosopher-poet heart raised me into an existence of beauty, curiosity, and observation. I have you to thank for my exposure to and love of words, and am so grateful for the endless nurturing and help in this journey to pursue my dreams. To my father, whose patience and support I owe so much. You offered me every opportunity possible and told me I could do whatever I wanted with it all—so I am. To my brother, Lukas, who as a birthmate and eternal friend makes this life what it is. You are my whole heart. To my friend and fellow poet and writer Shelley Valdez, who walked the Canterbury Scholar path before me—thank you for your love and the way in which you live your life—you are, in your very being, an inspiration and incarnation of love and light, and you were the friend who made me believe in my poetness. To all the dear friends who will find their names written in my heart for eternity: I love you. To the humanity and the creation I live to love: thank you. To the Earth, who gives endlessly: thank you. To the body I am: thank you. To the God who is: thank you.

I am who I am because of you all. My words live the way they do because of you.

Thank you.

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For Breonna Taylor,
Emmett Till,
Oluwatoyin Salau,
Michael Brown,
George Floyd,
Eric Garner,
and all the other Black lives
whose humanity and sacredness
have been violated.
Your lives matter.
You are part of me
and I pray I will go beyond words,
I pray I will do better,
I pray America will rise
to its occasion
and embody the love
we are meant for.
May that miraculous love I believe in
bring the wholeness of justice possible
to you
and to our broken
and beautiful world.

A Beautiful Life, Apparently

Try not to resist the changes which come your way. Instead, let life live through you. And do not worry that your life is turning upside down. How do you know that the side you are used to is better than the one to come?

—Rumi, or his teacher Shams Tabrizi

What makes a question
beautiful?

Does it soft and fumble
off the tongue,

roll unsteady against
the flesh of voice

circle a shape in light
toying at darkness,
its pull its lie

saw at the bloody
gut of fear
flicker off the slick
of wound

creep along goose bump
sprinkled arms that rise
for the calls
of ancestors
and spirit

tremor in the open
mouth, buckle in the breath
trace around a body
through a body
in a body

turn the whole view
upside-down

and then retrace
its steps to prove
no points can be made,
only love in
curious form

The Dot In A Question Mark

My mother speaks with the moon.
Last it was full, we stood
hip to hip, arm in arm
admiring her complexion.

The sky most days
makes existing feel
like a story, an impossibility
that floats through space dust
with a marble as accessory,
the sun's light resurrected
every night. If I think about origin
quantum jibber-jabber and
dance hard enough, things start to slide,
flood the storm drains. I am all
crush and web, intangible.

And then the moon speaks back.

She says, you're realer than you think.
If it made any sense,
you'd be in trouble.

I Used All The Right Soap! I Thought I Did It All!

Then you find out prayer has nothing to do with being clean.
Today I prayed by folding into the hole in my chest.
Watched fish come up for air in the lake of my childhood.
Let someone else do the breathing—
That sure as hell wasn't me.
I'm not that sure about hell, though,
Suppose I have lungs for a reason.
Allow mystery to be my deepest incantation.
Speak with love as keeper of body and blessing.
Today I prayed, wondering about prayer.

And How A Child Weeps For His Birth

daddy nestles me
into the scoop of his arm
one of two creatures
formed on the unexpected
turn of another fly
at fatherhood

the hand that's cradled five
tiny heads, I wonder if
the awe keeps with each
or if it simply startles
differently every time

and mommy traces the round
of my cheeks, a soft-skinned answer
to their compromise
our twinned reincarnation
*anything for a little life to hold
in the palm of our imperfection*

now if I squeeze my overgrown
eyes closed just
enough to take the edge
off modern vision
her hand will smooth
over that head of worry
again a patch of fuzz
and days-deep in memory

I don't wish after the past
for its innocence but for its
courage, theirs or mine
it's all the same blood

The Convincing

[HOLY SPIRIT]

Is that you drifting or me? She asked me
if I feel awake or like I am dreaming most often
I say I am not sure. I know
very little. The holiest
moments seem to be dreams. But it is they I want most
to be real. I want most.

[SCRIPTURE]

I swear by the heavens and the poorly translated
hell I'm not sure I believe in I will get
there one day and I will be wrong and you will
be wrong and we will all be
just fine. God whispered to me it's okay
not to know. God shouted it's not okay
not to love.

[BEDTIME PRAYER]

It is most often less than
sweet. Pre-dreaming
licked by tea-water tears and lots of
why. The cup still brims
over with Life. He adds two
cubes of sugar.

[WORSHIP]

Light criss-crosses.
On the dark side of my eyelids
sits the other side of the fence, green
redeemed. Sometimes thoughts like bits
off a mountain break, turned folly. Unsteady,
avalanche-prone, flying as the rise and fall
of a soul well-spent.

[HALLELUJAH]

My hand cannot help
but reach, tenderly you take
Yourself upon it and I am thoroughly
convinced. Enoughness stands delicately
on the tip of my tongue.

[CHRIST]

Do you laugh when people call your name
after stubbing a toe? Greater love, You hang upon my heart.
The Incomprehensible sought to heal and

feel everything the world has ever felt done heard twisted,
just to know. A God with humanity. My finger grazes my wrist.
Love has no one greater than this.

[THE LIBRARY]

Holds just as many Bibles and contains
moments sometimes holier than
church. Involves dancing in bathroom stalls.
Late-night mirror crawls
into Saving Grace eyes. Intimations.

[CHURCH]

Safety did not pronounce your name
until she clarified that the definition of faith
welcomes questions. The cup of life
brims with them. Safety
becomes the definition of family.

[EYES]

The presence has been piercing
and warm. Doorways crafted
with sanctity, I walk through
captivated. Someone other-
worldly lives there. Enlightenment of the eyes
appears much fuller than the mind.

[TREES]

Know You in a rooted
way into which I must water
myself. They dig deep, they reach
higher than eyes can
climb. I know it's more
than sunny up there. Knowing
light takes both the earth
and the sky.

[HEART]

Keep careful watch of your beatings,
there is a God stitched into your sinews.
Hum gentle like a Lamb, feel tiger-deep.
Love your imperfect love, it's human
enough.

[LOVE]

If it becomes about anything else
run. If there's one law you don't break
this. Give what you can, take what you
know. A million untruths will teach you

less. You're unsure, but with this you can rest.

[FATHER]

I wish I pray I understood. But let it go, and *bang-bang* that which makes sense not makes the earth spin round. Whispers my soul into being, be still. You and I are a-dwelling-place. Peace ricochets.

[DEATH]

Fear not, my history pleads. I've never heeded enemy requests to wring my hands, I've run wholeheartedly to cross the bellowing future. Don't you know a creation so vivid could never really die? I am quiet, quite alright. The stop needn't be kind.

[HOPELESSNESS]

Is not an option in this heart-of-mine, heart-of-Yours place. The devil's attempts at friendship, scandalously I repeat no, *thank you. You're too late* for me. The darkness is never on time with a world-clock set to the Awoken gasp of unshroudable light. Three days for eternal sunrise.

[AMEN]

That I might mean so be it.
That I might be convinced. Faithfulness needs eternal convincing. Today I feel again
That I will be filled with love forever.
My hand cannot help
but reach yes, *thank you.*

I Was Born a Libra and I Will Die That Way

The not-self, dreamed it
to be a pickup truck
parked between horizon line
and the sun. Idling, no gas,
not even a pedal. Drivers who
dawdle get burnt in the rays, shift
onto this tightrope before
nightbreak. Quick, a tilted
axis-in-orbit breaks the scales,
throws a parking spot several
football fields per second.
How does justice taste,
raw? I take mine
charred, the kind regretted
as soon as it touches tongue.
Reverse sunrise is just sunset.
Hard to sleep at the wheel
in all this damned light.
There's a god for that,
a love that'll teach you
to cruise control straight into
the sun, no combustion.

Brother and Sister Acquire One Way Ticket Uphill

We throw our feet to the street
and use ice as vehicle, surf's up
on the black and cackle
because that is what twins do,
dynamite from womb to grave

Sleek, the dark turns to slide
we glide in boot form
no preparation but the load
on our backs

Traction edges
meaning when two
might fall instead of one
together, so quiet
and slipping down the hills

I make it memory
unshackled to our moment
curse myself
for losing grip

Where shoe meets slick
we shed the weight of broken
loves, dead religion, defunct
expectations, sweep the mess
below the ice and just for the moment
he has me remembering
how life can be less heartache
more tumble into light

Lips Part And

Nobody's got my tongue but the cat sure looks hungry. Slide toothed lick across the mouth to check for cavities, words meant for the open. Run slack in the batter of our earth, language hides under the glut and I don't blame it. Simmer is to truth what shelter is to honey. Against my molar rests a verb: overcome. The feral of my brow hopes for blood but the tone of my prayer lusts after the tail of the galaxy, reverent. Chewing on the air between rock face and enamel, hoping for smooth delivery—*swallow and walk*. Emerging from the under-soil a phrase calls loose the horizon and the screen falls down, until no single lie rests easy, until meaning is beat out of stardust.

When Five Becomes Four

You sit down and one day you are dying.
The clouds quake and the house rolls and somebody
brings a tea rose to your nostrils, those sputtering
for breath. Sometimes pain isn't
something you can talk about so you leave it
tethered in the closet next to your box of things
from work and the prescriptions you ignored. The body and all else
fragile holds on. *Let go when*
you're good and ready. On Father's Day, our father has
four daughters, one son. A family clings to this mattress
on wheels. You're second-born,
Amy. A week ago the flock
of us was playing squash or tinkering with red
hair dye, unaware of grief.
Wondering how many lies it took
to get to this room. It's always one phone call,
the end. The rings around their eyes. I've never
seen a child watch their mother wane, parents witness
their baby lose breath. Generations sandwich the end. Life is a little
silk in the wind, gutter of light. It's a miracle
we don't disintegrate. You surrender
to a psalm of lament
with no amen. Baptisms are bathings,
nursing and sponge. Someone paints
your fingernails plum purple. I ask for
the room and mourn words for
your freedom. The day after Father's, we go in shifts.
Two days after, his eyes meet the sun
without you. I'm left wondering
what will my father say when people ask
how many children he has.
How do we decide.

To Be Light

and in the clearing
the bees pirouetted so
planetary and unadulterated

that would hold me
for one more day
at least

Yet Still, The Darkness Does Tremble

Unto this factory in orbit I throw my untidings. Once upon your ghost I prayed to my God—their answer crushed in all my bodies, an aluminum man underfoot, already drunk, prohibitionist monk without a single friend. I expect nothings and the delivery kills. I almost call it crucifixion. My mother felt that in her belly, my dramatics. Her womb swallowed all the questions to come, now they collect in the nook of a birth prone to violence, constant. This has nothing to do with god. Dehydration, devil scratching at my mattress, blank stare casing blank religion, the bedtime plate grows cold. Mythology speaks with a trembling voice, words of stardust archetype. This has everything to do with God. What dialogue will melt this deadbolt body, coax joy to drink, undo the frost blood never reaches. I rub my own belly, affectionate the woman's breath. Shoulder mirth's murder and standby for resurrection. Walking on water is rising: just to kiss the day.

The UnConvincing

[HOLY SPIRIT]

I am not sure. I want most
to be real.

[SCRIPTURE]

I swear by the heavens and the poorly translated
hell I cannot believe in I will pass
the torch one day and I will be wrong and you will
be wrong and we will all be
somewhere. God doesn't whisper
anymore and I am
shouting. Love is the only
thing that makes even a sliver
of sense.

[BEDTIME PRAYER]

I dream without you now
and sugar went seldom.
To wake is to tumble.

[WORSHIP]

Thoughts like bits
off a mountain break, turned folly.
Words I cannot say
anymore. The dark side
of my eyelids has become
my eyes. Light criss-crosses
unsteady, avalanche-prone
and I can't see past a why.

[HALLELUJAH]

My hands cannot help
but reach, the sky calls it
stalemate. Bitterness stands delicately
on the tip of my tongue and raging
against this is my only
prayer.

[CHRIST]

Am I your child or are we children
hanging together? The world revolves
done heard twisted, unknown.

[THE LIBRARY]

Even you, even you
lose your splendor.

[CHURCH]

I attend worship like a funeral.
There is still space for this.

[EYES]

Have failed me. There is
no sight without conviction
of the ground.

[TREES]

Know the sky I've come to
forsake. I try to plant roots
in quicksand, the message
gets swallowed by its sink.

[HEART]

Keep careful watch of your beatings,
there was once a God stitched
into your sinews. Friendship slithers
like a snake's promise. I freeze.

[LOVE]

If it becomes about anything else
run. If there's one law you don't break
this. Give what you can, take what you
know. A million untruths will teach you
less. You're unsure, but with this you can
rest.

[FATHER]

Will it ring the same if I call you
Mother? Nothing in the universe is
still. You once held my gravity,
I've fallen limp in no embrace.

[DEATH]

Peace waves a white flag.
Not a soul can see it.

[HOPELESSNESS]

What demon is this? I watch spindles
of light retract, pray for perspective
and take issue with this rendering.
At least I am

true in the ink.

[AMEN]

That I might mean so be it.

That even without a God

I might be convinced. Today I feel again

I will be filled with love forever.

My hand cannot help

but plead, magic word

on the tip of my tongue.

No That's Not Quite It

I think my
madness shares a
tooth with the
jasmine flower

A Crow In Its Bath

Bird bath obsidian sleek
ritual preparation for bodies
who swallow stars who
absorb wings to make away
with their wreckage

As the crow takes it landing
green as a blade in the mouth
I engulf in feathered flame
catapult into love like its
death isn't scattered across
the skies

Like hope isn't the saddest
little boy I've had the pleasure
of knowing

Critical Analysis of Apostasy

I miss God like the back
of my hand ripped
astray and all I see is the blood
of it, nothing to talk to, nothing
to hold my flesh, grip relinquished
how will I flutter myself
open?

Palms pressed on the other
edge of the raw I will
pray that love holds the rest
together, that the web
of my vessels courses truly
along new routes, that caterpillars
can cocoon without
an instruction manual
of prior thinking and that good
things come to those
who have nothing to do
but cling to skin
and wait

Lord hear my prayer
if I still know you—

When my first breath is a butterfly,
I'll evangelize
the sky again

Eve's First Sip

My mother wears mud as a
coat of arms, washes her face
downriver. Somewhere in the ocean,
a bubble rises, bursting forth into
the bright of surface
like a child's first collapse
into time.

My mother talks about freedom
like she is living in it and
thirsting without it
at the same time.

My mother, hand to back,
feet to rock-held current,
fishes gnawed branches out of
the July snowmelt. *Išvaliau*. She says
she is cleaning it out.
Mud sprays the place where her
širdelė beats beneath.
Perhaps the river
is thanking her for caring
after its freedom,
for plunging her hands
into a trickle of the glacial
chaos that means
we're alive.

I Know You're In There, Dammit

I paint a picture of myself
and she stands like an unlit candle
far across the water some
unbreachable distance
between the love I know
is there and the love I
convince myself there isn't
another option would be
to paint a boat into my shore
and paddle mad
to her lonely island
all the way shouting that
love is here and coming
so swift but maybe
the distance isn't
the problem maybe
the match is already
in my hands and I
can swipe the sky
to bridge the gap

Night Sky After Celebrating My First Questionably Religious Christmas and One Week After LASIK Surgery

did you see it
impossibly bright
twinkling mad
beyond the mountain

Christ, glistening
in the sky along
to the beat of
an old 60s tune

maybe Elvis, decked out
in sequins, can you imagine
that Jesus all white suede
and winged

I thought for a split
second I'd been wrong
ready to shed to my knees
bow with all my breath

for the savior
had come
to wash away
my slander

but then
the legs of this star
retracted, a spider
folding into itself

the glow of its eye
withering against
black

and when it dwindled
beams bent inward
a body abating

I felt myself question its sanctity

yet what would I have done
for any other kind
of love?

Psalm 151, The Warmth I Offer Myself

Holy word I am hoping for
another scripture and hear it
somewhere in my own contours

Body animate and its blood
indeed it's the blood that's saved
me—there's a psalm written

in my wrists, I heard it today
as the bone performed a miracle,
the weight of a body and no snap

Holy fold between my nose and
cheek you remind me of my delicacy
and I give you thanks for the

tinest of curves shows me
an oily sort of
tenderness, rolling

the way a heretical heart beats
underneath the proverb of my skin
its only blasphemy to

stumble through the day I know
I will fall in love but first
I will embody it

Falling Back Into Orbit After Visiting A Place of Doom

Nobody asks
from what nebula do you trace your ancestry
from what palette were you scraped
yes, birth of a star
iron tongue to taste
this is who you are

molten history joy drips like a spark plug
a scatterbrained memory of heat and space sugar

here's the thing
about kissing Jupiter
cupping that giant storm
to your face

it'll break every charm
of sticking your head
in the dirt
and even nihilism
can't argue with
all of those moons

and another thing
this one concerning
Saturn it'll teach you
a marriage you can
count on
replace doom
with an exchange
of untallyable vows

for I do lawfully wed
this mystery
proclaim to forsake
misery,

looking through telescope at the sky this is who you are
this room a little appetizer
and on the horizon sits a place
where breath and planetary motion
are one

the family tree calls
from light years away
asks a few startling questions that come
with a hint of hydrogen

how do you bend with your light
what bruise of color snaps you

where do you see your edges expanding
and how slow how fast must they catapult

how many mothers are you willing to acknowledge
and will you let the earth
and sky continue to mother?

I have made a choice
and calling stars kin
is my favorite reality check

You Call Yourself Hungry

to this day loneliness
looks like a photocopy—
a trembling body unplaced
and void of the tangles
which glisten us so
beyond our own skin

the definition of a map
has never been the ground
 no sane love
 calls its surface
 the only transaction

to this day loneliness
looks like
 a cold foot
 no beloved to ease the purple chill

 a splash of winter against color
 a frostbitten sky cracking the iris
like staring into the sun and calling the blindness

 annihilation of light

the definition of a map
could be line of vision
ridges in the soles of our feet
the slaps of pollen in a nostril
blessed rose-pink bubble softness
of flower infant swipe of sunset
your hand in my hand

I've run hungry for direction
seek to tangle as if
I could've unwoven myself
from the abundant

from the knots and handfuls
of each other and earth
 that are exactly love's cup of tea

to this day attempting to transcend
is exactly how to transcend
 but I'm staring like a goon into the sun

Earthbound

Seagulls float wind
whip overwhelm into
sky and roll with it
bless naked ocean
by praying wings
and caving into
freedom yes they
would like you
to think
a little less
beak the dawn
beak the block
that anchors you
to your little sandcastle
prison fly hysterical
mad beyond the waves
so high the crabs
are just twinkles
and your heart
can finally hear
itself the seagulls float
wind instead of drinking
it, ride cool air
like nobody's business
like somewhere
down the line
there was a miracle
and shouldn't
you sit on a bench
and know it
too

Ode: Intimations of What Our Souls Have Seen from Recollections of Early Beinghood

I sense I am
ancient and search
for my spirit in the
dents of my spine,
the ridge of bone
at base of neck
the scoop of hair
curling into itself

I imagine that my lungs
are a wide sweep of ocean
tiding in and out
of me and my prehistoric
layering of vessels

I hold space for the wisdom
between my toes
the eternal refracted
in ten fingers holding
the sky

and quietly my age comes
like the roll of a shell
pressed to ear
the sound of two
black holes colliding

I sense I am a step
from is
and was
and is to come

and I surrender
wet mouth hoarding
the waves

The Homecoming

[HOLY SPIRIT]

Few corners have felt holy or spirit
as of late, but still I dream a horizon
beyond and speak to it. I prayed to be
real and I got courage. Honesty
is my weapon and the enemy
blank-cartridge fear. Have you been
smelling all these flowers?

[SCRIPTURE]

I did carnage to the human story
by shutting out pages. If God
loves through you and me
maybe all it takes is a ring
around the campfire.
A reckoning with history. A dig
into the earth, holiest word.
Where love is the interpretation,
cover to cover.

[BEDTIME PRAYER]

I'd like to talk but what kind
of dialogue are you interested in?

[WORSHIP]

This party is no fun
if we're all
sitting down.
Would you like to dance?

[HALLELUJAH]

Love and love and love
are here.

[CHRIST]

Good God, if you really rose from the dead
it's no wonder you get so many holidays.
I send silly curses at time for making me
twenty-first century, but then again,
two thousand years of distance makes
a leap of faith all the more thrilling.

[THE LIBRARY]

I've become a bit of a homebody
and goodness well I haven't

been reading much at all
but there's a Babel
in my mind and I suppose
all this twist of language
must lead straight to You.

[CHURCH]

We ask questions and
the questions never run out.
Love is always in the answer.
No exceptions. Let's shake
hands on that.

[EYES]

I still stare into their mirror
image like she's a stranger.
Love looks like intimacy
looks like eye contact
looks like nakedness
born in the viewfinder.

[TREES]

Are deep historians and good
role models that turn
light into height and wouldn't
that sort of economy benefit
the masses. Green
is my new favorite color, acts
like prayer would.

[HEART]

Love comes with its own logic.
I attempt to stitch grace
into my sinews, hoping
it goes straight
to my head.

[LOVE]

If it becomes about anything else
run. If there's one law you don't break
this. Give what you can, take what you
know. A million untruths will teach you
less. You're unsure, but with this you can
rest.

[FATHER]

I think therefore you are.

[DEATH]

So not the point.

[HOPELESSNESS]

Sorry, I can't seem to hear you?

[AMEN]

Every breath comes back

to its beginning. To be

to be to be to be.

Love is, with you, with me.

I keep forgetting

to say *thank you*.

To Lap The Dust

folding all the way over
takes time so

listen, that catfish tree will grow in every dream

will swim on and on

through soil you thought was dead

there was a name for this once prayer

that's to say

when pine
needles become
whiskers

when roots sprout gills like logic learning to understand itself

you will know what's true
by the sun
overhead & overheart

a dream inside a dream inside a dream

the whole canopy in scales

listen,

this catch will slip and thrash like mad
and the next one
and the next one

each mind's eye raised
miracle-izes a whole stock of fish

shiny bodies leaping from the dirt & flying

like rockets
on the way
to a new mythology

loaves might multiply
and the flour will taste like iron & good company

mostly because silt

is a byproduct
of love,

you have not learned this yet

a dream inside a dream inside a dream

you have not let leaves splash from your limbs
fished hook from chest and snagged the edge of the river

galaxy-wide
& rushing with memory

you have begun to listen
and are finding

a conversation with tenderness looks something like gardening a creature from the muck

and whispering holiness
to the sopping layers

still
to come

My Ribcage Makes Eye Contact

says I love you back
opposes pandemonium
and lets mercy run its marrow

My ribcage understands

every language
would like now to speak
with the moon
would like the tears
on my collarbone to cross
and water the seeds
planted in its bone-dense
version of the Big Bang
would like the light
that shines through
my abdomen to call forth
a brand new horizon

My ribcage is a little house

of muscle-clad rooms each
painted a different color beholden
to a face of the infinity
each with its own record
player that tracks
memories my body
came with and the phrasing
of my lungs

My ribcage flirts

says hello to my fingers
like tectonic plates
admitting to their own love affair
thirsts after the flexibility
of my spine at the same time
that it knows jealousy is
what the spirits calls
chasing after wind

My ribcage thanks God
for the jumbled universe
inside surges like rock formations
that plunge out of skinline
in each heaven-dreamt breath

is constantly filled with quiet
dread that has nothing
to do with the truth and

My ribcage would like
to speak
with you

would like to invest
in dialogue with oneness
fancies itself
a landscape
does away with separation
expands to make space
for the grit and laughter
of ecosystem
knows that freedom
means holding the heart
steady and allowing it
to beat

would like nothing to do
with loathing
and everything to do
with peace

My ribcage sees

through the fragile paradigm
of loneliness and fear
has never been lonely
a day in its life
spreads its wings wide
and asks for intimacy

My ribcage is
never disappointed