

Rubbing Alcohol

I miss the days when I was acquainted
with the ways of the dandelion petals
closing at dusk
anthills being fortified
at the chance of rain
leaves turning up to welcome
the drops
the logs
that were the best for finding frogs
underneath.
but now the world reeks of
isopropyl alcohol
all I have to do is light the match
and it will all go up in blue flame
and the ants won't defend themselves
they will be paralyzed
the dandelions will turn to ash
and my bare feet
will never stumble down the jagged driveway
calling for mom
for dad
for comfort
to be put to bed
to wake up in the morning
and not notice
the cuts
on my feet.

Autumn

When you are sad you are the soft blue of the sky in September's beginning, like a well loved baby blanket thrown carelessly over the world, the clouds as holes and the rain as the discolored spots where juice was once spilled. It's ok to be a little discouraged when you realize summer is over.

When you are in love you are Indian summer, the world is alive with crimson and tangerine and lemon sunlight and the trees seem to be bursting with joy from the very tips of their roots to their topmost branches. The grass is green and the robins egg sky gets jealous of the way it sparkles in the dew. The smell of dirt and apples makes you think this time you've got it right, but it's ok to be a little overwhelmed with all the color.

When you are content, you are orange groves in October. You're knee deep in a hayfield and there are sunflowers tumbling out of your hair and your steps are slow, eyes closed and nose to the wind, smelling the lavender dusk sky and noting the tiny moon peering from behind a tree laden with orange globes. It's ok to stop and take a breath, appreciating how far you've come.

And when you are empty, you are the last day before winter. The grass has turned brown and it prickles the back of your neck as you lay down in the front yard. The trees are empty, as if the thrill of fall was too much and they just want to sleep for a few months. The sun is grey and casts an eerie shadow on all objects in its path. The hard ground should make your back ache and the frost should make your nose and cheeks and ears feel Jack Frost's kiss. But you don't experience any discomfort. And it's ok to wish for feeling, any feeling, to come back.

Haunted House

The ghosts that haunt the hallways of this dusty yellow house are torturous to me.

You can see them, but you can't touch them. You can speak to them, but they will not answer.

They manifest themselves through crooked frames hung on dark walls containing pictures of people we don't talk to or about anymore.

They shove themselves into conversations with old friends, the words "sorry" and "loss" all too familiar in each ear, the churning all too familiar in each stomach.

They sit at the table for family dinners, though no one says anything about their presence.

No one passes them any mashed potatoes.

And they stay up late, much like they did when they weren't ghosts and blood still ran through their veins.

These ghosts live in the minds of the people who know not to dwell too much on the past

But they dwell anyway

Because it's the only chance they will ever have to see these people turned ghosts again.