

henry's still king but we're older this time

henry is always king of the hill,
he's bigger and smarter and stronger than you,
maybe just as afraid but a lot better at hiding it.
you can still see him there,
in that church parking lot,
the ice on his hand-me-down mittens glittering as his
Outstretched arms catch the sun.

for some reason he's the only one of your four siblings you
can still recall as being little, like when he
delivered newspapers or
played little league or
threw up rocky road ice cream in the bathroom.

we used to make popsicles out of lemon juice and ice and sugar and
play playstation in our lime and ocean basement on this tv
my uncle traded to us for a \$30 dvd player
and when you're five or six or eight this doesn't feel
significant or special or like anything all really except
you know henry's not as little as you but you still get to
be together.
but somehow, more than a decade later, you can still picture this:
a bird's-eye view of two kids with sticky hands,
the looking at the tv,
the girl looking at her brother.

(hey, I want you to know I remember all of that)
(hey, I want you to know that it's okay if you don't)

it's ten years later and we're driving down this byway on the
opposite end of the right side of michigan (or, the part that
feels like home) and Henry's eight days away, maybe not in distance but in
commitment and I'm doing my best
not to cry in the car.

it's night and with the lake to our left and the airport three miles behind us
liv claims she could survive on friendship alone;
I don't say so, but I envy that.

we're silent for a few minutes, the only sounds are some
local country station and my pulse in my wrist.
apartment buildings reflect back on the half frozen lake and
the bride is wet with rain..
I hope it snows tonight, this week,

sometime soon.

I miss henry, but at least when he's not here I can pretend we're not growing up.

roots

if I lay in bed and turn off all of the
light in my room I can feel my heart beating in the
entire space of my chest
(for love, for love, for love)

when I was six years old the sky
fell open on Louisiana and
rain fell down on God's people;
a thousand miles north, dad's
brow crinkled when I filled the bath
too full and the drain
dripped dripped dripped
into the basement.
what I mean is all water is old water.
what I mean is I still see dad's
tissue paper forehead and I
am still always overflowing the bath
(what I mean is six year olds don't
think too much about New Orleans)

I was born magnolia tree,
born soil, roots, Rum River,
the alluvion of sand on Lake Michigan's shore.
my mother touched me, baby-skinned and pink.
she touched me and she wept —
 my child, my child, heart
 like the Grand Canyon,
 love will always come easy
for you.
(Mom, you were right)
(Mom, I'm sorry)

the truth is, I am not ready to die yet.

I walk down my Muskegon road,
yellow leaves and asphalt.
I feel my body:
first my shoulders, then my elbows, then
wrists, hands, knees.
the sky cries for me today,
a memoir of childhood baths,
sprinklers, dust tears saved

from eighteen years of feeling.

Louisiana is less broken than it
was twelve year ago and
I am less broken, too.

“I will give you the land and you
will take care of each other,”
God said.

“for love, for love, for love,” my
heart says back.