

SNOW ANGELS

Each night they stare into the sky
and wonder why even with wings
they can never get off the ground.
Good reason for their creator
to take three steps, cock his head
and disown his gift to the world.
Abandonment: a likely origin of anyone's
lack of faith. And faith: precisely what's needed
to soar in the purple abyss of winter.

We step out into our lives like sun slicing
between buildings and perform this one angelic
act that melts from our consciousness.
We return to our houses to accomplish
something important, leaving behind
the ones who don't know any better,
who see the wings as open arms,
snow as flesh, and are willing to lie back down.

AIR GUITAR

Out of all my instruments, the most prized,
the one I allow no one to touch.

The color of sunlight and atmosphere,
and when tilted the right way,

as if you were going to play it like a violin,
the faint hint of turquoise. I perform best

with the blinds drawn and the lights off: the electric
lime of the Pioneer Reverberation Stereo Receiver

is enough to keep bare toes from jabbing into table legs,
knuckles cracking against doorjamb while windmilling.

After work, after I've uncorked the bottle,
the wine granting my first wish, I slide under the strap

and unravel my fingers on Wes Montgomery licks.
It's well past midnight when I staccato through the house,

chugging on "Hell's Bells" as I rock on my heels,
balancing on flame-tips. And it's long after

the bars on Pleasant Street have closed, the sidewalks
overflowing with feedback and faces bent out of tune

that I play along with the song they're humming,
the one about home, and how it's a quartertone,

somewhere between C and C#,
and how we remarkably find the right key.

NEVER ASK WHAT'S UNDER THE BED

*Your grandfather once shot a man,
my mother says over pea soup on the porch—
chucked his sorry ass down a well,
kept the man's false teeth as a souvenir.*

*Take that to your fancy school
for when you forget who you are.*

The jobs have ditched town, and the freight
trains are gone—no longer rattling
windows, shaking nails from rotten studs.
The house shivers on its own.

We move out to the yard, squat down
on five-gallon buckets and scavenge fallen
pears among dandelions and bluegrass,
my favorite AC/DC T-shirt and my woodshop award
stuffed in a cardboard suitcase at my feet.

*My generation, we didn't have learning
disabilities, we just drank homebrew,
and threw knives at each other.*

Sweetness drips off her chin,
her mouth a honeycomb of bees.

NOTHING YOU CAN DO

For Chanel

I'm boring. I know this.
I wake early in the morning,
walk around in boxers and socks,
listening to a classic Blue Note recording.
You don't care for Coltrane, you
think socks and boxers unattractive,

but you're not here, so I spend hours
at the window, coffee, cigarettes,
watching the neighbor kick his dog
for digging up roses. I think about poems,
how many trees I could put in them;
birch, pine, hemlock, maple.
On the other side of the grove,

traffic rolls down the highway.
The interstate is a belt holding up
the greasy work pants of the world.
My fifth cup of coffee: I'm buzzing—
worried by the sugar rotting my teeth
and the way you'll say you love me
when you walk into the kitchen

after a day at the office:

*I love you, Sweet Butt,
my box-of-imperfection,
my little ball-of-shit.*

Grinning in the bathroom mirror,
I peel my lower lip down to my chin.
My teeth, sickly refugees huddled

on a tiny raft breaking apart in open ocean.
I teeter on the idea of calling a dentist,
but like a childish god I'm patiently waiting
for all my toys to sink to the bottom of the tub.
What did you do today? you'll ask,

flopping down a stack of paperwork.
Wearing a maroon bathrobe, I'll look

up from a Frank O'Hara poem, and say, *Nothing*.
You'll shake your head, run your hand
through my slicked back hair, and click-clack
into the next room with a *You're so boring*.

I'm transfixed by the miniature whirlpool
I create with a spoon. The earth whips
around the sun. I'm clinging to its pant-legs.