

Four Poems

By Katherine Kallas

Off 8th Street

Memory is a place shattered by wind
Its pieces swept up into god's dustpan
and dumped in the Mississippi River

The water is murky here, on the tilted shore off 8th street

Frogs with full lungs, as bulbous as onions
Cicadas scream in high-pitched static
Dragonflies hitch on the water's surface
wisps of neon blue thread stitch a map
of someone with hair as long as tallgrass
With eyes that hang low
as the branches of a live oak

My boots sink in the mud bruising earth
I pack purple into the collarbones of the bank
Cast my line into the mouth of my reflection
and fish for something fat and familiar

Nest

Memory: something orange, like the glass beads in Jenna's kitchen windows that separate me from a cloud-coated sky. My therapist tells me: settle into your body, try to find it again. How to find home in something lanky and unending? Burrow in a stomach made of silk and a head stuffed with steel wool.

I wish I could build myself a nest like the sandhill cranes on the shores of the Missouri River. With hearths full of blooming milkweed, burgundy flickering through the sedges. Beds cushioned with ferns and cattails, a muscular roof – a mother's copper wingspan.

Instead, I hoard loose fibers and margarita straws, trying to construct safety in this body. To pack it full of lace and optimism, and fly to a lighter place.

Audrey's House

Cicadas are Audrey's birthday month bug
and sometimes if I close my eyes and believe too much
I can hear them way down in December

I watch girls drive dirt bikes through wiry grass
Churning up dust – all the dead things are alive again
resurrecting the dusty parts of me that July sun dried out

I fear the world spins too fast for me and that I'll be left
floating on my back in an above-ground pool
somewhere Arkansas

So tonight,
I toast to imperfections
and with grapefruit on my tongue
I raise a glass to late August bitterness

American Flag Chest Piece

Points of contact at the ankle and nose, hook onto each other for stability.
It's Tornado Alley outside.
I am patriotic when it comes to him.
Light roman candles, we watch the birth of several large stars.
I crawl under his skin, like an American flag chest piece.

Anita says I need to – Grow and learn to yell.
Louder than the static which hovers above fields of tall grass.
Balls of anxiety, mosquitos dart through the air looking for someone sweeter.
"Never settle."

Red freckled shoulders, houses he constructs in the air, "when we . . ."
Talk of mountains, and toddlers, and porch swings, and balding.
Anita calls me for dinner. Her voice pierces the air, like the sharp salutes from paper bombs
exploding on the driveway.
I march in blue boots all the way home

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