

These are the Words I Wanted to Say

Senior Paper

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My poems are about a generation of people who never grew up. Or who grew up too fast that they then forgot how. My poems are not only for fellow poets and lovers of literature, but for the ones who don't normally read poetry. I want my poems to give a voice for them. These poems are love notes that were never given and bedtime stories that were never told. I want to remind the reader that mistakes are made; ideals and ideas are had and then changed. That we can love one another and turn our backs or we can be forever loyal to who we once were and want to continue to be.

4 Haikus: Consciousness

- I. Melt soften stir dream
stars like batter being made
tumble over us.

- II. Do you remember
the moment you saw the moon?
The skin of her hips.

- III. Your magic sings the
sounds of the train, your legs stretched
naked on your bed.

- IV. “You are beautiful,”
I stumble over grown grass
that stirs us like seas

What it means to be Young

When you cried in my
arms, I tasted youth in my mouth
Did you taste it too?

To Learn About Longing

The bath tub has claws. I am five and snow
is falling outside like a reminder
that I am young and don't know
what it means to be filled with longing. Later
from a girl with small teeth, I learned that we whisper
about longing because it persuades us
to move. In its talk, we become
mermaids or sirens. This is what
the tubs' claws remind me of. A siren
with sullen eyes and skin like clean dishes.
My mother reads to me about these
creatures and when it grows warmer I pretend to be them.
I pretend that my longing is deadly. I pretend
that my longing can cause
shipwrecks.

I don't understand what it means
to want or to regret. I am too young.
But I know what it looks like.
My mother is friends with the mailman and Mr. Kimbark
an old man who lives in a small metal trailer. He gives
my sister and me stuffed animals and is always
looking out the window. His hair reminds me
of a snow globe and his hands
are like the paper I crumble when I don't
like what I've drawn. He is sad
and we visit to cheer him up.

Let me start again with a new idea.
I think, though, the longing has always been there.
I think you recognized it in my eyes when I was born.

DOOM

She had written the word after playing
in the woods. Her feet were bare when she left
and were now covered in scratches like secrets
left to be revealed. She didn't tell anyone
what she saw out there and there was something
different in her eyes when she returned.
This is when she wrote the word down.
Simple lettering

One word:

DOOM.

At first we just smiled at her
as though she had done something cute
or done something only we understood.
But then we realized that she looked older
than she had before she left.
Taller. More lovely in the way of abandonment.
She looked abandoned. Her features not playing with
one another, but rebelling against them.
Her mouth a peach.
Her forehead a shipwreck.

DOOM,

She wrote in the dirt
that sat on our car
like an omen.

DOOM,

She later wrote on her bathroom mirror.

DOOM,

We whispered to each other
behind glass cups at dinner.

DOOM,

she said was her new name.

Home

I snuck out of my parent's house
once. I remember my feet
were switchblades on the grass.
They carried both usefulness
and rebellion. Shadows that shined like
ripened raspberries roasting in the
moon of bruised knees and bedtime stories.
Those were the days of youth.
We ate it with our fingers like berries.
Traces were left behind on our lips
like murmurs of memories melted in morning slumbers.
That night I emerged from my house like
an angel without wings. Our halos of youth
protected us. Under the streetlights we met.
You were a boy with hands just as unformed as
my own. You said to me that sometimes the home
we have never changes.
Your smile was a shadow of soft
adolescence. As we talked we became the ghosts
of ourselves until the muted eyes of
early serious light brought us back to our bodies.
Like a saint I kissed your cheeks.
Like a coward I turned my back.
I remember what it felt like to come home.

To Mother, Perhaps

Reaching on the tips of my toes
like a tight rope walker I find your journal.
Top shelf of your closet, hidden like most memories are.
Like some kind of mirage from a past that is not mine
I stumble through it. Your hand writing is a reflection of my own
and the words you use to describe the moments
that seem to collapse around you are palpable. You saw Jesus
in the clouds while you were stoned and felt a guilt
you could not hide. There is a photograph of you
as you sit on the hood of your car. Your mouth
is laughing yet your eyes are different
from how I know them. You look about 17.

Did you crave days spent alone?
Did you feel a physical desire to disappear?
Or did you want someone to look at you from across the room,
maybe for someone to lean in close and listen to everything
you were thinking? Growing up with you I learned
we did not stay in one place for long. Loneliness followed
you and now it follows me. Do you think I remember the same
things you do?

When I was young my sister and me were never lonely
we clung to one another like snowflakes to branches.
I understood though, your longing for a friend. I
drew with crayons that broke too quickly. You made us
tomato soup and we were happy even when it was grey
outside. I looked at you with round eyes and I understood you.
I watched my father and sister run around the house in awe.
We were alike though. We liked to sit with our hands
crossed as though in scared prayer. We liked to keep our
own secrets.

You had a secret friend. She was too wild, my father
would say. She was too strange. I found her beautiful.
Her feet were always bare and she would take
me for long walks in the rain. Her thin frame
was that of the birds I saw in the park, free.

We wanted to be free, you and me.
Are we free?
I imagine you sitting on the hood of that car
a joint burning your throat and Mike Tindal,
your high school boyfriend with his hand on your

knee, making you laugh. He looks at you though,
like you might disappear and I think you liked that.

Home, That is Not Mine But Yours

The silhouettes of the trees bring me back
to you. Their branches stretch on the pavement
like a sermon to your arms.
In your mother's house I held you. We traveled South
once and the road lingered like a long love note
goodbye. We hung our arms out the windows and we
felt the air on our fingertips. We were going home. Home a word
that is foreign on my tongue. You made me roll it around
in my mouth like pastry cream. Home. You said it too
and your eyes were no longer shards of glass
but chandeliers shining. We smoked cigarettes with smoldering
fingers. You asked me "What is your dream life?" For a moment
I wanted to say, "To be a ghost. Take me on your
journey like I do not exist." I did not want to
take your memories. I knew you needed them to be
your own. Like explorers we arrived into town.
In our dark clothes and lost ideals we stuck out
and like a shadow I followed you.
As the moon lingered longing
in the pools of your eyes we went to a punk show
and drank beer. While everyone was passing
out or making out we snuck into your mother's
attic. Like robbers we opened boxes of your
memories. VHS tapes where your father smiles like a beautiful vandal.
Your mother looks beyond the camera at something we
cannot see and there is a look on her face that resembles your own.
We found drawings made with your unsteady
hands like letters from the past, like secret maps.
It seemed as though they had directed
us unknowingly to this precise moment. I imagined you
in all these moments that could fill an attic. I imagined you
in all these perspectives that felt caught in the air like lost worlds.

After, we smoked out the window and the ghosts
of your past surrounded us. The girl you made love to
with small shoulders and rich parents and your friends who
live in small houses where soda cans and smiles litter the
ground like stories I haven't heard yet. They call you by another
name and this is when I realized that the home you have never changes
only you do. Hung over and tired we left with smiles
like broken windows. The ghosts only followed us for the
first thirty miles then were gone. They haunted us later in our dreams.

Somewhere Ordinary

The parking lot.
Boys with torn shirts and cigarettes
that dangle from their lips like juice
from strawberries. The girls look like
cats and their lives are never ending.
The music from inside sounds like
thunderstorms and switchblades singing
against wire fences. The light
from the bar only dimly reveals
our faces like auras of youth.
We want to be almost killed
by fast moving cars. When we walk down
the street we want to dodge bodies
like stars and we want it never to be quiet. We want to
hear conversations adorn our windows like cherries.
“Tell me your secrets” we whisper when we
want to understand. “There’s a price
for everything,” we say when we
realize we’ve done too much.
We dream to produce wonder. Stuck behind
teeth like fences hiding houses you
tell me your secrets. Lips apocalyptic
red. Impermanent laces through
the air like candles blowing out.
And then you remember that these
words are fleeting. Our words dissolve.
The buildings are taller now, and your eyes
beg me to have a séance for our memories.
These moments you forget
to repeat to yourself,
like lying in grass your hand
almost touching the heart of the
earth. This is what you remember
as you move your way inside.

The Blank Generation

I, the mouth, am weeping.

The drugstore glows "user" and the punks
and lovers are cuddling again under the moon
of rebellion and small wrists. We sit with our
knees to our chests, our hearts spilling through
our fingers. We are not permanent hangs in the
air of these talks. We are drowning drunk. Our
bodies crave a band or cash, falling heeling
spreading out. We rest a hand west in arrows.

"Don't turn your back," we warn, hugging with arms
that resemble rail road tracks and empty highway roads.

Squinting to think or see. Itching to swim and lulling
ourselves into houses near here where there is a sea.

You tell me of your longing and it begs me to leave this place.

We hide from the lists that our mothers made.

We ignore the messages left from our futures
that tell us we have not done anything yet. Here it is almost
dark. Towns and windows where people stray and sleep,
these are the fiends and friends. We move towards
the swoon of the mallows of hues. Towards
the exploding sky that makes our skin look like fallen planets.

The nights are long and dangerous. What do I want?

For the nights to be long and dangerous.

Free

“He was one of us,” the man said. He looked up at us with eyes that were like spoons filled with syrup. We had seen him kneeling on the side of the road. His head down like the mountains that surrounded him. We pulled over to find that kneeling in front of him was a falcon. The bird’s wings were sprawled out like a cross. Or maybe more like your limbs, after you have too much to drink. The man wanted to bury the bird into the soft ground, let his wings become roots.

We held the man’s shoulders as he cried for the bird. As he mumbled the same words over and over like a mantra. We wanted to keep the bird like a sacrifice, like a relic to a creature so wild. We wanted to wear the bird’s wings around our necks. I could not understand the beauty this bird had seen or the freedom, but there he was sprawled out like a drunken punk or like a cross waiting to be prayed to. Yet the bird was more real than that, more tangible than the images that circled into my consciousness. We could almost feel his wings on our cheeks, on our eyelashes, on our arms. We could almost feel the wind ruffle our own hearts like a promise that we did not have to be in the same place forever, that we wouldn’t be in the same place forever. We took the bird home with us. We said little prayers to the falcon. The wings we wear around our necks. His talons are our protection. “He was one of us,” we say. He was one of us.

Idioms of Destiny: 13 Haikus

He read our future
in the cards, crystals of light dim
chaotically

onto our faces.
He sat like a magician
our knees almost close

and your card read DEATH.
Seeing this you slowly
tapped your cigarette

like you held all the
time. Yet I saw the fear in
your limbs. The absence

of light in the room
reflected the magic of
destiny we can't

control. You sat back
and suddenly our breath was
the wind. When he tried

To read my fortune
it was too murky. My eyes
felt like silk being

ripped. I hide too much.
After, we needed air and
so we sat outside
The big mountain house.
"To gain perspective," you said.
The clouds crept like doom

and your hands were birds
being let out of cages
and old black hats. Our

woes are endless worlds.
We laughed instead. Let the warm
movement of our mouths

Take over. I saw

myself in your eyes small and
infinite. Stuck in

the prisms of your
wonder, for a mere moment
I was in the right place.

Normal and us

“We’re in this together,” we shout with every fiber of freedom we can muster. Even if all we have is basement glory and our hearts full of holes. This feeling comes on like a drunken dream. Hazy, in the particular shadow of your mouth releasing smoke. She’s sweaty from dancing and my fingers in my hair remind me of your words, “I’m a character.” The strings of your guitar whisper this fact to us. The tight space of the basement makes us feel more like one entity, one hart that continues to beat and mosh and break. Like masks we reveal ourselves, slowly without warning. US. We are here now and may not be again. The feeling in the room is NOW. We push and we pull and the music sounds like kissing and crying all at once. We fall and we get pulled back up an ocean of feet and then an ocean of arms. The music sounds like planets crashing to earth, like rebuilding, like destruction and chaos and a generation of people who want to say, “I love you,” without thought, with contradiction, but with feeling. Our eyes are crystal balls. We see the future and it’s not ours, but we know we can steal it. We can take it. We can mold it and make it our own. We’re more powerful when we’re together. We move like cats. We hide in shadows and smile at the darkness and the calm. We write on walls, “Over it.” We are over it, but we’re not finished. We’ll never be finished. The music continues to pour out of us. US. “We’re not normal,” we say to our reflections and then we smile.

Pretending We Aren't Gentle

A couple of young punks
we prowl the street
while the sky is grey and soulless
full of enlightenment,
full of reason and grace.
The rain falls
like the last sip of beer
or the first.

We say, "Be here
now."

Porch Conversations at that Party

"I feel guilty," he says.
When I ask him why
He smiles something dangerous,
"I had too much fun."
He says this in such a quiet way
He had to say it twice
for me to understand.

Summer Wars

Knees crossed in wet grass
beer bottles boom, battlefields.
You smile, I'm wounded.

I. Dreams: They forgot about Things

He would talk to her as though she were
under seas. Really, she was dreaming of worlds
that didn't exist yet. He would talk to her
when her breath was small sighs that resembled
pink sea shells and crystallized pearls. The kind of pearls
that remained in the gums of clams, not yet formed
and concrete. He tried to reach her in these dreams,
to meet in rooms of glass and wood. To tell her things
he thought she could only understand then. Yet she dreamed
of people who said, "You are not dreaming."

At the bar the two of them would talk
about their consciousness and the lighting in the bar
felt like the end of the world. Their faces appeared in pieces:
lips, eyes, a chin. Soliloquies blushed at the beauty of
these conversations. Everyone that sat around them
resembled spirits, soft and blurred. She looked through
her beer bottle at him. His face was a mirror of images and
it was just right to see him split and shattered stuck in glass
like the reflection of the fact that neither one of them was a
single entity or person. "There's no mystery to me," his
eyes wanted to say, but those pockets of perception
that hung in the glass...

II. Explanation

I feel sedated and awake.
I know too much and yet
not at all. Steal my words
and set them on fire. Smoke
my sentences and letters
and maybe they'll burn, burn,
burn, the way that I want to.
Blow me out and let me sleep.
I will tell you good stories that will
guide you to slumbers. Dream me
on the sea and I will sail to you.

Constellations

Your arms hang like wax from candles.
If there was a word for the way your skin
looked I would become translucent.
We do not belong to one another like the stars
we are in the same place at the right time.
I want to tell you stories of rebellion
but my mouth is like my heart and it doesn't work
yet. Instead we examine each other's palms
as though this will tell us everything we need to know.
The time we were born matters and so does the moon.
We think these messages from the past
and from infinity will tell us if we're destined
for this life. Instead we only hear complaints
from the ones that grade us. We laugh
in the wind at night. We become feral.
When the lights of cars pass our faces
we are unrecognizable. There is
something to be said for being
young and wild. Even if we're playing.
Even if we're just children or perhaps adults
now playing children. If I were to tell you not
to leave the wind would answer in response,
"Let go." So let the sun fall. So let me kiss you
like you are midnight and I am the stars
you don't know how to name. Or perhaps
I am a neon sign that has suddenly
been turned off.

Holden Caulfield's Ghost is still in NY

Every time you cross the street
you murmur, "I'm disappearing."
Slowly you are realizing that all you see
when you looked at yourself are buildings for eyes
and the light of a city for a soul. You frighten
yourself by being similar to him, Mr. Holden Caulfield.
Wondering what happens to the birds in central park.
Sitting in a hotel for hours pretending you've been shot
in the stomach after you didn't make it with a prostitute.

On every street corner there's a ghost
and it resembles you. When you first got to this city
every atom of it seemed to be flirting
with you. The people on the subway were saints
you hadn't prayed to yet. You used to say romantic
comments to women in bars as you took your whiskey straight
and balanced a cigarette behind your teeth like a chandelier.
But lately your speech has become gravel
and the romance of your words is now fleeting.
Instead you admit to her that you like to look
at your reflection as you write, a reminder
that you are still there.

Unspeakable

We walked to the gas station
in search of quenching our thirst.

The sun fell onto your shoulders
like the most gorgeous braid
falling down the most gorgeous back.
The sun fell on to your shoulders
like a trail of glass.
The sun fell onto your shoulders
like the illumination of a mistake I hadn't made yet.
The sun fell onto your shoulders

onto our mouths that remained unmoving.
Our lips remained stuck
and your stance was breakable.
The words still
remain shadows.
These words we all keep

deep inside our mouths or souls
like promises we keep to ourselves.
Someday we will share them
with someone who makes us brave.
We will sit face to face
and these words will form between us.

The rest remain hidden in our bones.
The rest remain.

Why you remind me of the Seasons

Your mouth unmoving
resembles the silence
only snow can bring.
And your arms
they are forever clinging to the sky.
You don't know how to save yourself
you don't know how to grow new
limbs. You don't know how
to fix yourself.

But when you smile, oh boy
you are the whisper of spring.
Your smiles are the flowers
we were told to never pick.
They are too rare and grow too seldom,
but of course, I never listened to these warnings.

I warm in your smile
like cats under window sills,
stretched and certain.

Your seasons don't make sense
they follow no order
and repeat.

When you call my name
that is summer leading us home,
even though home remains
uncertain. Even though home remains
a promise that you have broken before.

Your sighs
are the sound of palm trees
waltzing in the wind.

Your heart, the hurricane
that comes after a day in the sea.

Fall? Fall is me
curving in the small of your back
like the most comfortable hammock
and afraid like the most haunted
of houses.

Relics of an Empire, Notes to a Friend

The sun hangs low in our eyes and when I write this to you, you could be anyone. I haven't seen you in five years and our faces, I know, have changed. There is a moment in everyone's life when the reflection you see is no longer your own yet it seems stranger when the reflection of a lover belongs to a ghost. Can you stretch your mind back to when we were so young we didn't even realize it. We drank the beer we had with small sips. Our chests were unbearable, unbreakable jewels. Pearls escaped from our mouths like buried treasure. Tell me when you go to sleep at night what memories guide you? Can you comprehend that we thought the world was ours? We walked down the street one night like visitors. Like everything around us was expendable but precious. Your hand in mine and the streets were empty. Covered in snow we were the only ones around. "We can make our own Empire," you said and it was true. The days grew hot and we sat further away from one another. We lay awake and realized it was the end. Phantoms of ourselves hung out in the hallway. We learned empires were lonely. We learned that our ribcages no longer connected. When you looked at me I felt railroads rumble within me. Escape we whispered behind closed lips. Escape we whispered. Goodbye we said.

Waking up after the Fall

When she stood naked in front of her window
she tried to remember what he meant when
he said, "I'll be right back." There was something
uneasy about his words as though he
didn't mean them. Her hips didn't mind neither
did her knees and her mouth surprised her by
smiling slightly. Instead she stood with
her feet like ballerinas and smoked the
cigarettes he left behind. The sun shivered
in through the window like redemption or
enlightenment, words she had never
thought about before. The light made her
feel beautiful her body bare her bed
empty only black heels hiding beneath
it. They suddenly looked like relics of
a life she could hardly remember. She
liked her feet bare, she realized. So her toes
looked like shells so her feet felt feral. She wanted
to see them dirty. The green hills outside
reminded her of her own wildness.
The way the wind made the grass move only
reminded her to not turn back. Don't look
back; She didn't want to be turned
into a pillar of salt.

Untitled

The leaves fall around us like a promise
that life is changing. "Let's forget our names,"
the empty limbs of the tree's branches taunt.
Talking to you is like eating chocolate. The words
melt in my mouth, sweet. In our talk we become
all the things we forgot we wanted to be. There is the idea
that we are so many people at once. You never know
and the moon begins to resemble our thighs. Your thighs are
the moon. When we're together we enter space. The
cosmos dance on your chest like some kind of mirage.
"Let me hold you," we say with biting lips, "Like I am
Saturn." Patience is a word we cannot even begin to define
and times are hard in the west. So like the ocean I move
in waves. Whisper words like the sea crashing and I'll
run you over. We are made new in the ruff like some kind
of mythical creature.

Way of the China Town Bus

The sky exploded the day that you left.
I held you in my arms and we watched the
stars chase our thoughts like reminders
that we were leaving the world of the familiar.
I hugged you and we got lost in it all. We got lost
in our arms and your stance that seem collapsible.
We got lost in who we thought we were and who we
were becoming. I held you and you began to cry and I began
to lose parts of you that had always been mine. We said
goodbye to ourselves. We said goodbye to each other.
I told you, "For you, I give you my heart." I asked you to take
care of it. I wrote this down for you in ink. I told you to keep
it safe and to keep it close to your own. "For you my heart,"
I said it out loud and the words disappeared into the air
like most words do after they are uttered from a mouth
that is truthful. I wanted to remind you that these words
were infinite. I wanted to say so many things, to
remind you to breathe. To let your breath become all
things it hadn't before: a magician's glove, a swan, a
broken snow globe.

Close your eyes and then open them again. Change your
perspective. Remember that you hold all the cards, so why not
turn them into magic?

The Snow Man

He always knew
eventually
he'd turn back into snow.

He knew one day he'd begin to resemble it,
but for a while he resembled only the sun
and the word "freedom."

When he was young
it was his legs he admired most of all
they reminded him of roads not yet traveled
and his knees were always her.

When the day came that his hair began to reveal small patches of icicles
he was not surprised.
It was happening.
And when she kissed him
every kiss felt like a snowflake.

He began to shiver.
He remembered when his hair used to resemble
the woods
thick and black
dark with wildness
and an eagerness he was starting to
forget.

His eyes began to leak,
his insides were melting.
He could feel his heart
getting smaller.
His bones he knew
must resemble large diamonds of ice.

One day he kissed her for the last time
and smiled in a way
that she knew.

He walked for a long while
wondering what the infinite meant
by forever
and what the snow meant
when it melted.

He walked until
he no longer could
and like a blizzard he fell.