

Tendencies

Fourteen

I dyed my hair purple,
half-priced and long-lasting,
because I am cheap and have nothing better
to do than try to change myself

I am made of split ends and cracked ribs and a dash
of anxiety that is slowly boiling over

The circles beneath my eyes match
the milky way bruise
on my left knee but I don't
notice the ache anymore

I have taught myself to clench my
teeth while letting the water
run cold as if I could possibly numb
my worn out bones

I guess this is how it feels to learn to love
the parts of myself that
no one ever claps for

But my mother tells me that I
am allowed to be both
a work of art and a work in progress simultaneously
and that my life will always be full
of missing parts
and some days I will be missing my feet and others
I will be missing my head

and while I sit with holes in my being,
knots in my fading hair, and debts piled high from
the promises I was never able to keep,
I see myself in the indigo moonlight and
realize that no amount of hair dye and cold showers will
fill my hollows or mend my fractured parts

My Dependence on My Mother

It all started here.

When I could fit myself and all my worries into a small bathtub and tuck them into a twin-sized bed. I could fill my passions in a pot on the stove and boil them until they were just right, perfect for me to consume.

I could list my best friends on one hand and count to five on the other when doing addition in math class. I could let my curls spring wildly from my scalp and they would bounce in the wind as I played tag at recess.

I could only read Dick & Jane books and say my ABC's, only stuttering once, and I memorized my mother's phone number so that I could call in case of emergency.

I call my mother when I don't know how long to wash something in the laundry or how much flour to put in my cookies. I call my mother when I run out of dish soap and laundry detergent and need to borrow hers.

I call my mother when a boy I like doesn't like me back and I call her when I don't know how to untangle my jewelry without breaking it and I call her when I don't know how to untangle my life without breaking it, too. Those are my emergencies.

My life consists of nothing more than burnt pastries and knotted necklace chains and empty soap bottles and shrunken clothes and stressed phone calls to my mother.

When I speak with her I feel like I am seven again. I feel like all my problems are so small they could fit into her palm and she comforts me when I am anxious about them. She closes her fist and holds them out of reach until I am okay enough to deal with them.

It is in times like these when I wish I could go back to being small, when my whole world was centered around making art and running as fast as my boney legs could carry me, all the way home to her.

Bad Habits

you stand at the center of it all
and watch it all crumble,
watch it unravel,
find the boy who pulled the thread
try to fix him,

push poems between his lips, staining
his teeth ink blue,
build your home between his upper
left ribs, his heart is your front door,
cracked, half-opened, barely standing,

glue him together with nothing but
Band-Aid brand kisses that won't
stick for long, leave a trail of breadcrumbs
in his bed so you won't ever get lost
on your way home

your fingers tingle like the water's run
cold while you've been trying
to wash away everyone else's sins,

stop trying to find the one who
started the fire and bandaging their
burnt hands while your skin
still smolders