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Age: 17, Grade: 12

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Category: Poetry

one side of a threshold

in which I am not fog

the fog clings to the ground when it has nowhere else to go,
too heavy for the heavens and too cold to drift away,

until the first warmth of morning when it rises to meet the sky
and is not welcome on the ground until the sun is gone.

I cling to the ground because it's the best place to be,
no burden from the heavens and nowhere else I need to go.

I wait for the sweet light of daybreak so I can rise to meet it,
but I would never see it — my eyes are always closed.

the fog condenses and blows away; that's what it was born to do,
but I've been cursed with wanting: I can never simply *wait*.

closure

it's so strange to hold what I longed for
in the palm of my hand:

in the car, we see by the light of the
gas station sign, our faces cast in red and blue;
we have candy and cups of sweet slush that
turns sour in our mouths and laughter that
will expand forever. delirious, we bask.

I know who I am. I am not afraid.
I have never been so certain that I am loved.

I spent years longing to seep back into the
earth, believing I would die before I ever felt
this way, aching for what I did not think was
real. somehow I survived.

I want to remember this well enough for
it to reach every bit of my life — for that self
who yearned for love, and for selves I have never
been — surely it won't always be this easy.

high school

why did I believe I would be

alone here? of course I'm not —
I am only hidden, and
it's so beautiful to be found.

we're here: we recognize those carefully
chosen words, that certain poise. we
know each other; we love each other
like no one else can.

alienation is something we do together:
locking eyes across the room, knowing,
sharing this time across the rift,
our own polari of glances.

in a world that was not made for us,
we can make our own — the periphery
is a refuge if we're all there together.

a Southern death

if death is silent stares of condemnation and the cornerstone of Hell is
ruthless and haughty, surely Alabama will kill me someday.

here, my heart is a bounty on my head; I am wanted dead or born again,
and my words are splintering plywood in need of sandpaper and milk-white paint.

this world was constructed in defiance of what is good and true — maybe
someday change will come, but I know I am not strong enough to wait.

I thank the South for who I am: somewhere else, I'd have been someone else;
but then I thank God that, someday, everything I know will come to an end.

someday, knowing they have conquered me, the feverish sun will have mercy
on my skin and the humid air will spare my lungs. but in that defeat
I will be victorious: I will die a Southern death.