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Category: Poetry

California Teenager Crown Sonnet

CALIFORNIA TEENAGER CROWN SONNET

1

Beneath dusk's shroud we slip and fit ourselves
into a gas station Mexican restaurant.
I order my usual, you something else
I can't pronounce—glass Cokes in hand we haunt
the town. Cracks in the sidewalk don't consider
my eleven pm curfew, and I end up knee-scraped
on the curb, rubbing spit in while you snicker
at the state of my burrito, beans caked
on the concrete. In this place, there's a certain
quiet, only the clatter of high-end cars crossing
the train tracks. We roam slow through our suburban
habitat, you mocking my fall, my mother calling,

it's eleven-o-three and these dreamy streets don't
belong to us. I should retreat, slink home. I won't.

2

I should retreat, slink home. I won't. Instead,
we unravel on the grass, backs and asses
damp. Sprinklers hiss into hibernation. Heads
heavy, we submit to the green, spin around the same axis.
July sits heavy in the sky and I know my mother
is watching the sun creep down, skeptical
as time sneaks sweetly by. Flies hover.
This is a wicked evening, seemingly chemical,
the smell of dirt and delusion pulls us deeper into null.
Caught in clover root, we waste, we want
to want nothing. I say to you, *give in to the pull*.
I'd like us to open, become soft and rot

in the soccer field. At home, my mother sips her sun tea
on the deck, one eye on the driveway for you and me.

3

One eye on the driveway for me, my mother sits
on the deck while I wander the neighborhood
alone. It's three months I've been home, confined, an exquisite
kind of solitude. Three months of knowing I should
write something. I've taken to hanging cut flowers
from my ceiling, watching dead things be pretty.

I pick them while scanning the outskirts
of our neighborhood, looking for things to believe
in. Afternoons I walk, kick rocks down the asphalt,
circle the block. I air my grievances, repeat:
stagnant town, poems of abstractions and chalk,
lack of distraction, rain filled potholes on the street.

But tonight, an empty attempt at poetry in the kitchen as
my mother boils water, probes, puts in the tea bags.

4

My mother boils water, probes, puts in the tea bags.
She wants to know things, plans for the future,
I want her to stop talking, slow down. Days when she nags
it's easiest to wilt inwards, sit in a quiet corner
of the kitchen. My mother will leave
the dutch door swinging open, and then whine
about the flies in the living room, cleave
through the air with a rag, turn against the benign.
She stands in the window washing the dishes,
fills the compost bin beneath the sink.
Flies flit. My mother slumps and sighs, says it's
time we consider college opportunities, a preconceived

pitfall. I ignore her, wish for something new to
happen, for this town to break, for color to creep through.

5

This town breaks, color bleeds through
the cracks. I talk to the sky, the ducks
at the pond in the park. This town calls for
preventative measures, is known for ill luck
and throwing kids' cars off the road. I feel
yesterday at every corner, as if I might
at any moment become fourteen again. The deal
is that I tread lightly, and this town stays upright
for the time being, won't twist the plot. I can't
sleep. I moonbathe on the football field at the local
high school. There are some small things that
make sense only to me, a fraying rope, the opal

sheen of oil glazed puddles, the train horn bleating
at midnight. I could swear this town is breathing.

6

At midnight, I could swear this town is breathing.
My mother lets you drive her big red Mercedes, so
we go. Just go. We stop looking for eden.
We find that it's a different kind of summer, though
there's no reason we can define. We like to watch
the stars slide across the hollow night. I wish
and you wish, and then we're both wishing, not
sure what for. This town creaks. I could ditch
curfew again, but the air doesn't ache
for me the way I expect. I worry about the car,
recall that neither of us knows how to change
a flat tire. I'm seventeen and still don't dare

to drive. This town moves around us, swells—
beneath it's shroud we slip, try to fit back into ourselves.