

## **Our Family Mulberry Tree**

I've always loved mulberries  
I even mentioned them in my grandfather's eulogy

I'm so sorry, I wrote you reams of ugly poetry unfinished  
and as I read it all back  
I felt it lacks  
the fragrance of your potency

So this may be my last attempt  
before I cast out the rest  
like shadows fallen from grace  
with their purpose forgotten  
the other day I fell flat on my face

I know the unknowability of purpose  
the futility of control  
but I still can't bring myself to roll over and die  
even though I know it's just a ride  
you see  
I'm blessed by the delusion of your presence  
and I'm cursed with the reality of this separation  
I feel like my wife is owed reparations  
for the loss of so many futures expected

but i'm broke, and despite my mortal judgement  
I trust in Thee  
to take good care of our little mulberry

Did you know we had a tree?  
I think it's still there  
in my grandparents' backyard garden  
but I don't know  
or at least I haven't forgotten completely

I think I've been here before

but I don't know anything anymore  
except the unknowability of you  
and that's ok  
because it can't be any other way now

But, what do I do with this burning grief?  
just burn, I think

but I don't know, so just in case I'm wrong  
let me try, just one more time

Let me paint for you  
while i'm still stuck here trying to fulfill something  
some unknown duty  
whether real or imagined  
It's what keeps me going

I can't tell if this one's going to be long  
so bear with me, or don't  
bear witness, or don't  
I can't control anyone, I surrender  
and i'm too far past surrender too  
too far past it to be one of those people that "knows things"

you see

I'm trying to paint a picture for an eyeless being  
just one  
I'm not even sure if they have a mind  
but I think they might be divine and I know that writing this matters  
So just because I don't know everything  
don't mistake me as plagued with uncertainty  
I'm ready to be your father  
I was ready before this life, in it and after

Now, think, I need to write about my dreams, love, ...  
that's probably enough  
Not much else matters  
outside of our time together  
where you can grow with the flowers and know the magic of laughter  
yeah, I hope this brings you at least a little laughter toot  
So let's go-

I was due for an appointment that day anyway  
but it was nice to have the opportunity to do it in your name

See, I bled for you today  
the only way I imagined my father would  
willingly and without complaint  
maybe this blood donation can save a soul  
more talented with paint  
maybe they'll unleash a tidal wave of Love so great  
that everyone may know the power of our pain  
but that won't be me  
no, not today

We'll come back to Love

just you wait

First

let me tell you about my dreams

the ones that unknowingly prepared me for this-

the ones unforgotten, at least

the rest can't be written

See, the thing that makes this so challenging for me

I had so many dreams with you

before we got that dreadful news

you were different ages

sometimes you wore different faces

I still think there may have been two of you

and there's still so much I don't understand

First, I saw your face in teal and black

shimmering like the surface of an ocean

with two eyes closed- I thought it was like an alternate to ultrasound

that I-

I just couldn't figure it out

but I felt so close to you

Then there was another where I was with your mother

downstairs by the front door

our other two children safe

in car seats on the floor

we were getting ready to hit the road

but in a panic I remembered you, I thought "where had you gone?"

We had three children, not two, so I searched until I got back to our room

the rooms shifted between homes past and present

but the layout stayed consistent

shaped like the house we live in today

When I got to our room I saw more carseats spread throughout the space

so many of them were empty

so many- but a countable amount

and I remembered where I put you

I found you sitting there, still in this clear green fluid

I don't know what the fluid was, but it reminded me of a snake-

and I hadn't noticed until recently, but for me, snakes are recurring

anyway

you were in that car seat and I knew you were so cold, so I picked you up

I knew something wasn't right, but I wasn't worried, I knew just what to do

I took you to the bathroom sink and the rooms began shifting again

until we found ourselves back in one of my college apartments

the one I shared with my cousin, that cousin you would have known as an uncle

but let's be honest, you would have confused most of my cousins as aunts and uncles  
and I know none of them would feel the need to correct you  
but back to the sink  
I washed you under the warm water  
you were so small in my hands  
smaller than expected  
and you only got smaller as I began to wash you  
I peeled off all your dead skin  
It wasn't unlike helping a snake shed  
so peculiar  
but I didn't question it  
and in the end you were smiling and warm- you were perfect and healthy and warm  
maybe more than warm, you were warmth  
you were so small I only needed one palm to hold you  
and my hands aren't that big  
While I was holding you I saw you had a star sticker on your belly  
where the button should be  
looking back it's so clear  
what it all meant  
and I still think about that look on your face as I held you in my hand  
our star child- of course  
now I understand  
you were never meant to mingle with us creatures of the sand  
but it didn't make sense to me then  
I just focused on how you were perfect in the end  
In the next dream it looked like you were about ten  
we were out hiking, like spending quality time with an old friend  
The kind of friend you know so well that you don't need words  
to know when it's time to stop for a snack  
and it was just a brief blur- that moment I set down my pack to get your food  
we were happy, and we weren't lost, but I forgot what we ate  
and I don't think that trail was a loop  
then, after that dream  
well, I'm afraid the rest gets darker and more confusing  
but in the days between the murky dreams that followed  
I felt you with us  
and you were with us  
for some precious time- and I do still feel your presence  
but that's awkward to talk about right now  
because I know you're not here  
and oh man there's still a lot going on  
this is all still pretty far from done  
I digress: In another dream, I walked alone along a path filled with serpents  
they were all different sizes and colors  
and they were all harmless to me

but I didn't know that yet  
somehow, the path led to our bed where one of our pets was fighting the last snake to protect us  
and your mother was watching and crying  
because Nami was getting bitten  
but when the fighting was over  
Nami was ok  
the snake was dead  
the fear was gone  
and we were all safe  
If you asked me now, I think that dead snake  
was the same as the one in another of my dreams  
where the snake had two heads  
but not two heads in the way you'd expect  
it had one on each end  
just two dreams and two dead snakes, I wonder if they were the same  
Then I had a dream that I thought was unrelated  
I was walking, minding my own business, taking in the scenery of a beautiful city  
and then a complete stranger walks by me quickly, casually castrates me, and-  
and before I could react, I awoke  
Then there was a dream  
one of those dreams that sticks with you long after  
after you've forgotten everything else  
long after you forget all of its details along with every other dream you've ever had  
This dream haunts me completely  
but I still find it so lovely  
There was a person, not woman or man  
but a person with seven eyes where there should have been a head  
and I think it had almost as many wings branching from its neck  
all they did was look at me  
while cloaked in their black flames  
they didn't fill me with dread  
on the contrary  
they gave me peace instead  
i don't know if that person was you  
or what you're meant to be,  
or your mother, or me or my brother, or some other entity entirely  
but they were of Love  
and when I awoke from the overwhelm of that dream,  
I forgot something I had once known about Love  
and I think I forgot it so that I could remember the unknowability of Love  
and so here we are, with memories forever incomplete, still burning  
in love with someone unknowable  
our perfect mystery  
We love you my little mulberry

Did you know our family has a mulberry tree?