

A painting of a hummingbird in flight, its wings spread wide, showing intricate patterns of brown, white, and black. The bird is positioned in the lower right quadrant, flying towards the left. The background features a bright blue sky, a green hillside, and a foreground of brown, textured ground. The overall style is expressive and somewhat abstract.

You are either  
the fire  
the hummingbird  
the California coast  
or the act of flying  
backwards  
In this story

**Kat Sanchez**

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*\*Without wings, without wheels*

*For Sunshine*

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Acknowledgements

## Valley girl

I sleep in a rind of purple mountain

is it possible to find this sensation  
in the dictionary

is it too cold to put on  
the dress from my closet

today it is this color

define brrrrr

if I were a lemon  
could I have ever been

define blue sequin dress

there are some mysteries that are  
just beyond our knowledge

## Balloon

Things are shuddering. Beautiful things  
loom over my head, make the sky

so blue, even bluer. What about  
in California. Maybe this is  
California. This is

California; the way I move my body  
in my imagination  
is the same everywhere.

Every motion moves me  
toward some star.

Maybe what I see with my two eyes,  
third eye. Pigeon wings  
blind me.

On the bare surface of my heart,  
I miss everyone.

## Letter, September

the sky was becoming purple

I sat on the porch  
    was later the yellow light  
of the house across the alley

the wings of some small

bird disappearing

    will be that colorless part  
    of the sunset just before sky



## **The planes fly overhead**

This poem is made

of circles

When I look up it is

The sun is in my eyes

The house across the alley

is not on fire, but there

it is

The sun is an angle or a straight line, not a ball of fire

The light left in my eyes is a field of poppies

## Chicago, October

Fire engines circle my block  
but do not stop

The sky is filled with the moving

light of stars somewhere up there  
that I can never see

Speed boats speed  
up the Chicago river where the sun  
reflects an incredible brightness  
under the road bridges

I see the same two planes  
in the sky everyday

There they are under  
the gray clouds again

I am bent around the blueness of it

## Bongos

Sometimes  
I am full of  
red  
bricks  
full of  
screaming yell-  
ow suns  
a night  
sky which  
is made  
of the same  
kind of rock  
that fossils

the heart in-  
side  
my body  
is a  
bongo  
drum  
stone  
wash  
bongo  
jeans  
with a  
button  
fly

kayla says  
I go  
bongos

maybe I  
do

but in  
my drum  
circle  
there is  
a lot

of hip-  
shaking  
and what  
is more  
fun than  
that

the night  
gets hot  
and waxy  
while so  
many  
suns sun-  
stroke

bricks get  
loose  
search

party  
mega-  
phone

I put my  
hands  
into  
a danger-  
ous crevice

make a little  
knot of light

## Valley girl

we shared a room once

I admit I am jealous  
I am precise and

I want a body like yours and  
you are precise

you had a dress collection  
that overflowed from the closet

I loved you then the way I love you

my small heart beating  
like the moon behind fog

## **In the same dream**

I have never seen a bird in snow  
except for in a poem  
It was the most beautiful

thing I had ever seen

I have seen a dead bird  
but not a thousand dead birds like when the world ends

I have seen a thousand dead fish  
in a picture on the news though

I have imagined dying in a thousand ways

I am not cut up in any of them  
the way I am cut up in real life  
Sometimes my insides feel like cake

Pretty pink frosting yellow cake pieces  
eaten or left to dry out and go crumbly

while some kids play in the sprinklers out in the front yard

There is a face that haunts my dreams

I know it is my own because I never see it

One night I dreamt I was at sea with my mother  
In the same dream I spent my birthday

in California and the mountains were so close and beautiful  
Even the freeway was warm in its cement sky-gray

I had a party in a room with an inside like space

and in it I fell in love  
I knew it was love because it was something

I could see

The whole night I sat on Jupiter and spun in the darkness

My mother was a geologist  
or a biologist or an oceanographer

She handed me a sea turtle and I loved her oh how I love her

when in my dreams I bring her to the sea  
I bring her to the darkness  
to help me escape the miniature flaming arrows

of another dream  
She has taught me many wonderful things

like sometimes it's okay to call off from work  
to lay under the covers and cry if you feel like it

or your stomach has hurt so many days in a row  
you think you might like to die in your own bed not at your desk

Today I gave myself a snow-day to lay in bed an extra five hours

There is something that lurks between my dreams  
and looks like a black dot  
until it shakes its wings, steadies itself

## **Dream about a girl I know**

There is a kind of rage

Up in the sky, the poor moon

The poor moon,

I want to pummel her and her nice hair

And her nice clothes and her shitty makeup

I don't want to marry the nice boy from high school

I don't want to rake the leaves from the front lawn

It is a cowboy flick or one about to

To look up from this poem



The pigeons know all  
my secrets. They dive one  
by one, land up in the overpass. I hold my  
breath around them under  
the overpass.  
They fly more from  
the ground than the sky.

                                  in their wing-flap  
I am the darkness that surrounds the fire.

**Chinatown, July**  
*for David Trinidad*

David and I share  
an almond cookie  
David asks what  
are you reading  
I hold my hand out  
to block the light  
Blue crabs scuttle  
in a window  
aquarium But  
the whole sky  
is around me  
Pigeon is on  
the menu  
in the restaurant  
We buy lucky  
bamboo plants  
because David  
knocks one over  
& the water  
& the rocks  
spill out

## Long poem, Chicago, March

All this time I've been living in  
the blue poem

I can't help but be  
offering when I'm out in it

Have you ever lived  
inside the thing that is touching you

It turns me to stone

I'm confused by what  
I feel empowered by

I wanted to be in a dress  
under the sun always

but all there is

the blue-gleam  
of my eye-stones

## **Bird**

The balloon has always been  
in the sky. Nothing but light touches me.

Even with the blinds closed, I am in a  
slender light house.

What you feel is the hotness. I am filled with  
balloons. When they are inflated,

I am up the chimney,  
into the sky.

Sometimes they are tight together  
to burst, sometimes I slip between them.

Sometimes I pull them up  
with the light from my hands.

## **In the afterlife, we are flamingos**

*for Sunshine LeMontree*

I am a brain surgeon in my dreams  
And then I am not  
You are all the birds behind me at the zoo

In a photograph from 1991  
I also stand on one leg and think hot pink

I am visiting you in a hospital bed on an island  
I am exotic and so are you  
You are flying back to the mainland

And then you are not

I went to visit you in New York and wanted to be  
Your lawn ornament

I wanted to be your pink velveteen couch  
And the glassware pinking as the Brooklyn sunset

Skipped through the windows  
Of your garden apartment

I wanted to be the plastic twinkling lights  
Hung along your walls

We are animals like a goat in this life  
Whose four legs are clinging and clacking  
To the wall of a cliff

We write each other postcards and letters with  
More postage than usual

We have tried being as sad as possible  
We have tried being not in love with everything

## Poem happening in Chicago

I want to write a poem in which I am not the bad guy.  
One where I fall in love with the boy at the grocery store  
in case it doesn't happen in real life. One about the magic things  
I saw today: a plane in a blue sky; the old Macy's building  
on Diversey Ave, its angles and flatness; the front  
of an abandoned warehouse, then coming back,  
a busted-out window, red and blue and greenish colors.

I want this blue sky to last forever,  
and so it does. I am a long way away  
from my home in California. Every poem says so.  
There is a poem that steals my wingless-self  
to a place of birds. I am neither  
in this poem nor anywhere near it.  
If I were a heart, I would be the one inside my body.  
The valley, these leafless trees.  
I would be them all the time.

# Notes

\*From "Roam," by The B-52s

The last two lines of **Valley Girl (I sleep in a rind of purple mountain)** are taken from the episode "Groped by an Angel" of the MTV series, *Daria*

**In the same dream** was inspired by lines from Dorothea Lasky's poem **Toast to My Friend or Why Friendship is the Best Kind of Love: *What is a soul all aflame? / If it's a bird in snow, / Then that's what I am.***

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