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Two Poems

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Two Poems
By Lauren Coyne

1. Painting the World Anew

time stopped in the airport terminal
just as I stepped in after you,
like a proper novice
after a master
(or so you claimed)
and when I turned around, I saw
a brush,
acrylic paints,
and a note that told me
Paint the world anew.
I took time to revel in the palette
of infinite choices
and colors once unseen
by human eyes.
then with smooth strokes I blended
unpolluted greens and blues
to shade Earth's marbled sphere.
I stippled reds and browns
for higher, craggy mountains,
their peaks dabbed gray
with swirling storms.
I detailed with a white-tipped brush
the delicate strands of
spider webs,
wisps of smoke,
and veins of crisp leaves
curling like children's fingers.
I did not age as I worked
nor did I grow hungry
or thirsty
or weary
or start to forget.
so I felt no guilt
when I painted the things
that were solely mine.
I painted Todd's beard,
though it scratched me
when I nuzzled his cheek
and breathed in his spicy scent
that last time
when I kissed him
goodbye.
I painted Sam's tattoo,
referencing a show I never watched,
the way it peeked from their sleeves
when they played piano

and the notes tapered off
like their texts back to me.
I painted Alyssa
with her beautiful nails,
pink-tipped on our anniversary
when she confessed her infidelity,
red on her wedding day
where I witnessed as a bridesmaid.
I painted it all
admired it
and cleaned up my brush
once my task was through.
and this morning when I left that terminal,
I paused, only briefly,
to wonder
are you proud of my technique?
you, self-proclaimed master,
my unwanted critic,
who disguised condescension
as a compliment.
are you proud
of how I took your lessons to heart
on how coated primer can cover mistakes
and unwanted accidents
no matter how big they are?
(or would you be,
if I hadn't practiced, first,
on you?)
but then the thought,
and the memories of painting
and of the note
(and of you)
washed away like the water
used to clean my brush
down the sink.

2. Tsunami

The curtain is beautiful, and ancient, and cool to the touch

With its gradients of blues and greens

Edged in a gentle, foamy white.

The stage is sanded and the props set just so,

With chairs placed beneath umbrellas

With the coolers and balls in place

Easily accessible for the climax

Where you spike the ball

And toast your victory

With Coors.

But then you hear the overture begin to play, and

The roaring cheers from the gathered crowd.

You feel the noise in the soles of your feet

And your knees go weak

And you start to sway

And you see

The curtain

Rise.

You flee the set and don't dare risk looking back,

So you miss your co-stars' costume failures

As they lose their floppy hats,

And strappy sandals,

And the odd shoe.

You don't stop, in your flight, to wonder about those fellow co-stars,

Who among them might be tangled in the rising curtain?

Or trying to salvage an expensive prop?

Or fleeing alongside you?

Or staying behind?

You'll find out in tomorrow's front-page headlines

And make a solemn vow to never, ever

Pursue a job in theatre again

Since your stage fright

Is so terrible.

And you'll send off some quick emails

To concerned family and friends

And to the play's director

And hope to God

It is enough

And that the director, his suit the darkest black,

His face, so grim and grinning,

Pale, and white

Like bones

Won't come in person to persuade

Or try and call you back

Until you feel ready.

And you hope

You won't.
Not for many years to come.