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What's Taken, What's Given, and What I Choose to Remember

Grace Cieslikowski

Western Michigan University, grace.c.cieslikowski@wmich.edu

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Grace Cieslikowski

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I'm writing this to let you know I've reached baseline
The place I always talked about visiting
On those cold winter nights when the wind blew so hard against the window,
I thought it would shatter

You asked me once how I would get there
Given my heart was empty and my luggage was full
But I didn't have an answer

So, I ran.
As fast and as far as my legs would go and when they gave out, I crawled.
The past was hard to carry but I kept it with me until I collapsed.
It was in that moment
While I lay, face down in the dirt
When I had no way of moving forward
That I could finally rest in the present

I thought of sweet tulips, of stars, and then I thought of you.
Terrible, awful, uncomfortable you who spit venom at me like a snake

See this is where I left you
In a memory so far away that
I cannot recall
How your eyes looked or the shape of your face

This is where I left you
On the floor of your kitchen
Re-reading this trying to figure out

Exactly what you did to hurt me
This is where I left you

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Alone.

Just as alone as you made me feel
On those days when I hated myself

This is where I left you.

Not physically, I'd already done that but, mentally

'Cause I had forgotten all the things I wanted you to do

And all the things that you did not want to do back

Then I realized that the weight I had been carrying for minutes, hours, days, months,
for years was not something I needed.

And I wept

Like a widow who has decided to move not on, but forward.

To leave the place now too small for her growth.

For my growth.

So, I let go.

Of the pain, of the promises, of the hate, of the doubt, of the memories, of who
I used to be and suddenly,

I could breathe

I could stretch

I could crawl

I could sit

I could stand

I could run

I could fly

GRACE CIESLIKOWSKI

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