

Break

by Tamar Love Grande

©1999

1.

These tulips, so yellow in the chipped vase. The green soft of the velvet couch. A lackluster yearning toward sleep, and the listless, reluctant anger. Hard beneath the soft surface of green, yellow; the pain of a singular expression: my pillow vs. our life. Eager to begin.

This white expanse of an eggshell ceiling, painted by the sub-contractor, spreads absolute to the corners of this room I painted green, does not allow for the slight, widening cracks we might spackle: you asleep, twelve hundred miles away.

The peace of your unbroken ceiling, aloft above you.

2.

Here, beneath these jersey sheets, you make your bed. Once new, the bedding tears from the weight of you, slight holes: the friction of skin, moisture, a gentle rip from a belt buckle, a key ring, flesh, the clatter of change on the floorboards.

Heat, the extension of you, filling the space between my belly and knees. We drown in sleep, drugged and holy, foreign. The velvet pillows lie, piled, the soft nap rubbed crosswise, the candles burned to an orange stump, ghosts of smoke fused to the walls. Here, you say, and: I love you.

The peace of our unbroken ceiling, aloft above us.

3.

The coffee pot, fatally cracked-eggshells piled in the garbage-strips of oily paint dangling from the ceiling-ancient shredded wallpaper-the broken thermostat-bathing alone, weeping into the chipped tile-the cat, sick and bleeding. Torn lace on the white runner.

Fused smoke that cannot be scraped from the molding, the broken ashtray that could not be salvaged, clothes that tear, are mended and tear again, blankets brought out for the winter-your passage, from there to here to there again, a cold, lonely whisper. My life a howling scream: you, asleep, three miles away.

The peace of your unbroken ceiling, aloft above you.