

Helicon West

and the USU Writing Center present

October 17th, 2014

By Matt Halackiewicz

today,
I trek
the browned sagebrush lines of Naomi Peak.

her calloused palms
ferry
abscised scraps of silver-blue thorns and
spruce root,
aspen gold
and the years he has sold
like the counted leaves unfastened from their finger-trap bones.

I attend
to groves of ornery husks
of quaking aspen
recoiled, as they curtsey
then thrust
their cream colored torsos with all those black spots
towards a sky swimming in ghosts
on the cusp
of another winter,

I watch

White Pine water reflect
the orange-red rock of calcite cliffs,
the broken skin of a limestone Magog
as it ingests the sun's light

I count years since he left (...two...last night).

How many more, until I

take my place

by my dead brother's side?

Practice

By Alyssa Utley

My sister is in the bath.
I am kneeling,
arms stretched over the porcelain edge,
rubbing shampoo through her wiry locks,
rinsing away peanut butter, crusted milk,
ketchup, apple sauce.

After the bath, I will count out
eight different rainbow pills for her
and tuck her into bed,
a plastic baby doll wedged
in the crook of her elbow.

My sister is sixteen.

When people hear the story
of medical malpractice,
of the smothered lungs,
plum colored lips,
frantic midwives,
of latex fingers dripping blood,
their eyebrows warp with sympathy,
and you can see the phrase "If only"
forming on their lips.
If only that thick, slippery cord hadn't curled around her throat,
If only the oxygen had reached the delicate dips and twists of her
brain,
If only we hadn't been left with this crooked, drooling,
infinitely infantile shell of a person!
And then they walk away,
leaving those two venomous words behind.

But she doesn't hear them.
She is too busy warbling garbled melodies at the top of those
once-smothered lungs,
too busy dancing around the house—limp, twirl,
limp, stumble, twirl again.
She is practicing, because tonight is my sister's prom.
She has a new dress—ink blue, and covered in lace.
I dust midnight eye shadow over her twitching lids,
brush blush onto the full moon of her face.
When she looks in the mirror
her features scrunch into a grin and she yells one of the few words she
knows:
"Happy! Happy!"
The word swells like poetry in the air—

She is happy.

Happy.

Happy.

Helicon West invites you to open mic nights, 7:00 PM at the Logan City Library (225 N Main in Logan) every second and fourth Thursday during USU semesters. For more information contact star.coulbrooke@usu.edu or go to writing.usu.edu.

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