

Human Gardens

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Self-Introduction

“I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always, as long as I’m living, my baby you’ll be.”

These words from *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch have stayed with me long after I read them as a child. Even at seven, I could feel the emotional weight of storytelling. That sense of connection continues to shape the way I write today.

Growing up, storytelling was central to my life. My parents’ bookshelves were filled with titles like *Goodnight Moon* and *The Giving Tree*, and my mother encouraged my creativity by helping me craft my own miniature “books,” all ending with the letters “D N,” because I couldn’t quite spell “The End” yet. These early experiences sparked my passion for writing, and by high school, I was eager to dive into poetry. Unfortunately, when the pandemic shifted classes online, the poetry unit in my AP Language class was canceled.

At PLU, I rediscovered my love for writing. I enrolled in an Introduction to Creative Writing course, and for the first time in years, I felt like I was exactly where I needed to be. I soon realized poetry was my niche, allowing me to explore my inner world and translate my thoughts onto paper in ways that felt complete and authentic. I grew this literary muscle and eventually published work both on and off campus.

I first started writing about themes of nature after attending a Visiting Writers event at PLU. The editors of *Cascadia Field Guide*, a regional poetry anthology, led a workshop. This event, coupled with reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, kept the power of nature and storytelling at the forefront of my mind. I became further immersed in existential poetry about the natural world when I studied away in Oxford, England, learning about Victorian

poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Clare. For my capstone, I wanted to explore human experiences in conjunction with nature, influenced by my time on campus and abroad. This is why I decided to call my portfolio “Human Gardens.”

One of the most pivotal moments in my PLU writing journey was taking a poetry class with Dr. Rick Barot. This class was a “full-circle moment” for me, where I received structured feedback and guidance. Dr. Barot’s class was one of the most fulfilling of my college career. It not only helped me refine my poetry but also boosted my confidence as a creative.

At PLU, I’ve learned that writing, like art, carries weight. Every choice, even in silence or a comma, must be intentional. Writing is a tool for personal growth and societal connection. It allows us to see beyond the surface, engage with diverse perspectives, and become more empathetic individuals. I always hope to write something meaningful for myself first—something with emotional weight, much like the way I felt when I first encountered the words from Robert Munsch’s *Love You Forever*. I’m excited to keep working on my poetry, one day at a time, now connecting with all.

Ode to Autumn

We begin to lose words as trees forget their leaves.
The simple gift of farewell,
of offering its life into mine.
Like the Rocky Mountain Snail,
I pack my home along with me as I travel.
In so many ways,
evergreen forms the cradle of my first home.

Life happens underground in a series of brittle but fleshy roots.
Each tendril ticking a path
into the rubbled earth to rest in the darkness,
circling slightly at the tip like a fern.
The body offers itself to song,
life beginning as thunder in the throat.

I will grow and leave the shadows relishing the sunken chill
of the Puget Sound's colder depths,
floating and diving like simple sentences by the ferry terminal.
It has turned me to air,
and can fly right through me.

Maybe it is the expanse of sky above and sea below
that soothes my psyche.
Until finally the sweet whimpering of shorebirds
seduces us into sleep.
I can wade out as far as my heart can carry me.

Blackberries

A scrunch, a sound, the vine's soft plea,
Sweet as time that slips too free,
The blackberries stain my fingers' tips.

The bushes heavy with fruit I see,
Their promise ripe, yet quick to flee,
A scrunch, a sound, the vine's soft plea.

The sunlight wanes, the shadows agree,
That nothing stays, not even me,
Sweet as time that slips too free.

Juice smears like sin on shirts once grey,
A memory caught in thorn's soft grip,
A scrunch, a sound, the vine's soft plea.

The summer fades, the laughter slips,
But still I reach, though time may drift,
Sweet as time that slips too free.

And time will take what's sweet from me,
For youth is gone, and with it, bliss.
A scrunch, a sound, the vine's soft plea,
Sweet as time that slips too free.

A Manifesto

We will fall in love in October,
on New England streets veined with amber
gold. Wrapped in cardigans,
we will dance beneath pale streetlights,
slipping over cobblestones like promises.
You will stir in the gusts of a Boston breeze—
a pulse, a rhythm will find its way
beneath our lacy bras:
a song that will linger like city sounds,
a tune worth gasping, worth singing.

Lush cardamom coffee perfume will linger
on necks, on skin.
In this city of relics, poems will live.
Something here will call to the heartbeat:
salt wind off the harbor, the scent of spice,
the soft pull of the ocean's hushing desires.

We will stay in on stormy days with
neither grit nor sorrow,
thumbing through the latest books stacked
by our bedside. Or we will spend afternoons with
Edgar Degas's dancer,
forever poised in her bronze ballet,
before drifting
to the Downtown Cider House
to gather ingredients for blueberry pancakes—
not quite your family's recipe,
but maybe, one day, you will teach it to me.

Through autumn flames of foliage,
where maple syrup
will drip thick on our tongues,
we will wander, from mom-and-pop stores
to neon drag bars, glowing in night.
Maybe you will draw me into the clubs;
maybe I will bring you to figure-drawing,
where we will learn anatomies together.

A place, a wish, a lifetime—
lipstick stains on our collars,
vows unspoken but certain
across this landscape we will claim,
our manifesto, written in color.
We will be meant to love one another.

Rite of Passage

The female anglerfish died
After swimming too close to the surface,
The coldness of water in the hour
Before the dawn.
The forces of nature, pulling her up,
Drove her plight—
Recently spotted in shallow waters,
She saw sunlight for the first time,
As the pale sun threw a quilt of solitude.

Waves, delicate as fingers, twisted white
Ribbons of foam,
And though aware of the murky dark
That surrounds the continental shelf,
She moved along its endless thoroughfare.
She seemed less menacing now,
Next to shells half-buried in the sand—
Nature's finery,
The casual phenomena of every day.

Acknowledging the light she had
Previously been denied,
She prodded the strange air of a
Sleeping world—
Swollen by the rich juice of the dead,
Surely the untold desolation of
The morning would provide answers
To her temporary and now forever presence.

The dead-sea creature, only two inches long,
Did not attack.
Alas, she was swept upstream,
A biological anomaly,
A named monstrosity that should have been
Below the surface.
She glimpsed humanity,
But it was taken away when
She glanced back toward her home.

Rain

p
 it
 ter
 pitter
 patter tiptoes
 on window pane
 toadstools yawn a morn
 ing greeting haplessly clinging
 to sodden trees a mingling of
 pine needles gather in the sidewalk's hills
 and valleys oh how they twist and corkscrew
 watch us move above the fog a firm horizon
 denied by mist grandfather cedars heave huge sighs
 into the heavens a raven's shadow calls us home
 the flock pulls together like a winced eye
 dear sunlight we missed your clean throw rugs beating on the bay
 as I squat with a mug of smoky tea listening to the one
 sparrow claim his undisputed terrain over and over
 I observe the puddle stompers and avoiders
 but always muddled socks climb mushy feet
 one must salute the wide canopy as it shields
 many beings from the summer rain cover
 ing the wetlands like a mother's
 ever so calming
 hand

Escapism

I.

Sometimes,
 I wish I were in Alaska—
 whisked away, little by little,
 to a small town sketched in notebooks,
 overexposed in faded Polaroids—
 where waters churn with the humdrum
 of daily life, of chance encounters.
 I'd sip cider with lovers
 by my bedside,
 unhurried, unseen.

I'd ride the train
 past the border,
 through snow-laced ridges,
 a fortress of white—
 vantage points mirrored in Earl Grey,
 stirred counterclockwise
 beneath ghostly mists that cloak me
 until I am utterly
 capsized.

II.

Somewhere in County Clare,
 a serendipitous fleet descends
 along clover blossoms
 tinged with fading hues.

The morning sun,
 embracing misty sea,
 melts into itself—
 like honeycomb and lemon drops.

Tiny wings of Irish moss
 trickle up cobblestones,
 the lament of a foreign hymn
 bewitching the wind

across meadows,
 as sailors sing
 of Galway Bay
 and salt-stung farewells.

III.

In Bath, along the bowed back
 of old stone
 and interlaced fingers,
 the chimes strike at midnight—
 just at interlude.
 A warm air rises from underground
 with the boiling voice
 of medicinal waters—
 the goddess's breath
 beneath Roman ruins.

Ancestral engineering:
 teaching the world
 the virtue of the well,
 of closeness drawn,
 the swiftest cure,
 from mineral cause.

The old dark rubble
 hides hollow caverns
 cut with labyrinthine channels,
 islanding a thousand stones,
 each circled by blue thermal sea—
 insulated, alive—
 like sunbeams playing
 on a warrior's burnished arms.
 Nature, in her various tints,
 still speaks
 in native power.