

SUN GLASS

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ABSTRACT

SUN GLASS

by Joseph Kane

Sun Glass is a collection of poems that uses a variety of situations and perspectives to explore the themes of love, change, and nostalgia. Even though the poems in *Sun Glass* are told from the perspective of multiple speakers, they also work together to form a narrative about the difficulties and rewards of being in love. The narrative, however, is not explicit but often exists as subtext that guides the reader using tone and suggestion. The poems are often left open-ended so the reader can take part in the construction of the text's meaning and turn the narrative into his or her own unique story.

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INTRODUCTION

This body of work has become something quite different than I expected it to be. I had planned on creating a body of poems that stood alone as individual entities and were more or less loosely related. I envisioned a collection full of space—gaps into which the reader could insert his or her personality and weave the poems into his or her own unique narrative. I wanted the poems to relate tonally, not thematically. I wanted the feeling of unity among the collection to be merely implied by the poems and enforced by the reader's interpretation of them. I suppose that this has still come to pass, but, when I read the collection and fill its narrative gaps with my own perspective, I am continuously surprised to find how closely autobiographical its story is. For me, the collection tells a story of love found and lost; of peace found, lost, and found again; a story about roots, both the kind planted in earth and the kind planted in people, and what makes them take hold. I hope that other readers find as much of themselves in this collection as I did of myself.

The poetry that I often find most appealing is that which tries to express ideas and emotions that no word or image could ever articulate. The most powerful of these poems are those that form a communion with the reader and *evoke* feelings like love and loss instead of trying to *encapsulate* them. Each reader, after all, already has as much capacity for emotion as the author. The author's job is not to transmit feeling but to create an occasion for the reader to feel. The poems in *Sun Glass*, I hope, will create such an occasion. In order to achieve this communion I have put a great deal of myself into this collection, but I have also tried to make each poem an invitation for the reader to help

take part in the construction of its meaning. Consider, for instance, the first poem in the collection “there’s a girl, some girl, the girl”:

she’s on a beach, with sand,
and water, and there are birds,
four birds, watching; watching
the sand and the girl and the
beach and maybe hoping
for fish. the girl doesn’t see
the birds or me. she does not
know the distant pier, its wood.
she knows the sand and the
water and their mud love,
and between her toes
she sees with her feet, and
the wind in her hair, heavy with
ocean.

The poem describes the scene but leaves the particulars of the situation open to interpretation. Who exactly is the girl? What is her relationship to the speaker? What is it about her that gives her such a unique perspective? The answers to these questions are not fixed in an expository manner in the text but are left for the reader to construct. Building unanswered questions into a poem allows the reader to entertain multiple interpretations. If a reader interacts with the poem multiple times, one time its tone may strike him or her as peaceful, another time it might seem melancholy, and yet another celebratory. Similar to Schrödinger’s theory that a cat can be completely black and completely white simultaneously if it is in a box and cannot be seen, the fact that the way the poem “should” be interpreted is not dictated within the text allows it to be many things at once. I think that my ideal reaction from a reader would be that he or she is a little confused about what feelings the poem inspires but knows that the feelings are strong, whatever they are.

Even though many of the poems in *Sun Glass* are left open to interpretation, readers are not left entirely without direction. Again, consider the poem “there’s a girl, some girl, the girl.” Details such as the revelation that the girl cannot see the speaker and the description of the girl’s unique way of perceiving the world act as catalysts for thought/emotion that invite readers to be active participants in the construction of the poem’s meaning. As mentioned above, such details do not dictate what the reader should think or feel but create the occasion for thought and emotion.

Although the poems in *Sun Glass* do not connect together into a direct narrative, there are several themes that run throughout the collection. I am going to discuss three themes that I find to be the most prevalent, but I do not intend this discussion to be taken as instructions on how to interpret the collection, and I hope that readers, myself included, will discover many more common themes and interpretive permutations upon future readings.

The first and I think most prevalent theme is love. Poems in the first section express a hopefulness and yearning for love yet to be obtained. Consider the speaker in “there’s a girl, some girl, the girl” who sees a beautiful girl on the beach, but does not interact with her or the speaker of “Under the Sun” who seems to be in love with the idea of women but not any woman in particular. That feeling of hopefulness transitions into poems such as “Stay” and “The Intimacy of an Anklet,” in which the speaker seems to think that he or she has found what might be love. In the second section, however, poems appear such as “Slicker” and “Tumble” that deal with the notion of romantic relationships but in a manner less sure and less hopeful than the first section. By the third section, poems that evoke love also evoke a sense of loss. In “We Never Swore to Do No Harm,”

for instance, the speaker mentions his or her attempts to love the sun which resulted in being burnt. The association of love with loss continues through the fourth section. In the fifth section, the theme of romantic love is conspicuously absent, as though the collective personality of the collection needs a break from the subject. Love returns as a theme in poems in the sixth section, which, seemingly refreshed by the fifth section's break, adopt a voice that is, while not necessarily triumphant, once again hopeful. In "Limes," for instance, the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the person being addressed is never described in an explicitly positive context, but the speaker recalls memories with a fondness that suggests amicability.

The organization of love-related poems throughout the collection creates a loose narrative. The narrative is in part informed by the way that the poems relate to each other tonally, but more than anything, it is a framework onto which the reader can project his or her own experiences, and out of which the reader can construct his or her own story. Although, even though the poems leave much room for narrative interpretation, it is the love-themed narrative that I find to be unexpectedly autobiographical. I didn't even realize it until I read the poems in order for the first time, but the love-themed poems in this collection very directly chronicle the rise and fall of my feelings for the first person I ever fell in love with. I must say that the surprise was a pleasant one, and I hope that other readers will be equally surprised at how much of themselves they discover within the collection.

The second theme that permeates *Sun Glass* is that of transition. If the assumptions are made that the poems in the collection all share the same speaker and are in chronological order one can see that the speaker is often in a state of transition on both

a literal and metaphorical level. In the poem “Rails,” for example, the literal transitions of travel and the rebuilding of the track create a subtext of implied transition in the speaker’s life. Also, the fact that at the end of the poem the speaker is traveling from the city to country serves as a transition between the fourth section, which consists mostly of poems in an urban setting, and the fifth section, which contains a great deal of nature imagery.

If the assumptions that the poems are in chronological order and share a common speaker are not made, the sense of transition still exists because the reader transitions through the tonal differences of each section. The tonal transitions between poems and between sections are linked to the arc of the love themed narrative described above. They are also linked to the urbanity of the poems’ setting. As love begins to be called into question the setting becomes increasingly urban. Thus the fifth section functions not only as a break in the love narrative but also as a return to nature and the peace found there.

The third theme present throughout the collection is nostalgia. Many of the poems in *Sun Glass* are written from the perspective of a speaker who is looking back on past experiences. Even though I was surprised by how autobiographical the collection as a whole became, I always intended to include some poems that were stories from my life. “Wisdom,” for example, is a literal and direct account of one of my life experiences. Thus nostalgia is present in *Sun Glass* partly because some of the poems are the product of me enacting my own nostalgic moments. Other poems, such as “Limes,” are not autobiographical for me but are autobiographical for the speaker. I chose to use a reminiscent tone for those poems because I wanted the speaker and the readers to share an intimate moment. In a fiction workshop I was once advised that the best way to make

the audience like a character is to make the character like something. Consider this excerpt from the poem “Limes”:

Remember when you made that bowl
from beachglass we found one summer?
You only kept the blue pieces.

We ate a lime every day that year.
I still remember the squelch they made when opened
to the night’s humid swell,

and your corner-eye smile
during those slow bites
letting the citrus needle your tongue.

The fondness with which the speaker remembers details like the beachglass and the smile are humanizing and make the speaker more likeable. I also think that an honest recounting of a memory is one of the most private things that one person can share with another. By bringing the reader into his or her private world the speaker forms a bond with the reader in a way that wouldn’t be possible without the poem’s nostalgic tone.

When it came to organizing this collection, I was influenced by the way Terrance Hayes uses short sections in his books of poetry. Employing short sections allows for the presence of multiple contexts within the collection and play between those contexts. When a reader encounters a poem in *Sun Glass* it is first as a poem that stands alone. Secondly, the reader is called to consider why the poem is included in a particular section and how it interacts with other poems in that section. Then the reader must consider how the poem relates to poems in other sections and how it fits into the collection as a whole. The sections, as units, also interact with each other, and the reader is called to consider what role each section plays in the context of the collection. This myriad of contexts adds complexity to the internal discussion of the collection and encourages multiple

interpretations of each poem. Much of the movement of the story arc of the collection's love theme is made possible by organizing the poems into relatively short sections, and the beginning of new sections make convenient borders whose crossing emphasizes the collection's theme of transition.

Like the nostalgic speakers of my poems, I would like to create a bond with my readers through my poems. In many ways I feel that *Sun Glass* is a film reel of intimate moments that I am trying to share with its readers. If someone whom I never met read this collection and then claimed to know me, I would, for the most part, agree. In addition to learning about me, however, I also hope that reading these poems will help readers learn new things about themselves. I hope that within these pages readers are always able to find something new, something unexpected, something that they realize, only in retrospect, was inevitable.

I

there's a girl, some girl, the girl

she's on a beach, with sand,
and water, and there are birds,
four birds, watching; watching
the sand and the girl and the
beach and maybe hoping
for fish. the girl doesn't see
the birds or me. she does not
know the distant pier, its wood.
she knows the sand and the
water and their mud love,
and between her toes
she sees with her feet, and
the wind in her hair, heavy with
ocean.

Under the Sun

The Grass, he said, The Grass. I was reading Leaves of It, he said, you know, by Whitman. It made me feel good about everything. I love the world now, he said, but especially the grass. I can't feel it through my shoes, he said, the grass I mean, so I burnt all my shoes in a pile. But don't worry, he said, it was on the pavement, the grass is fine. I like to touch it, he said, the grass, and my feet just aren't enough. I reach down and bury my arms in it, in its green. I touch my cheek to it, he said, and it feels soft, the grass against my cheek. My cheek against the grass, as though it were a woman, he said, and she was made of grass, green and soft, and we were dancing. I think, he said, that grass would make the perfect woman. Soft and green and grass and in the world, he said, which I love. Which I love, he said, like her, and grass. Like a world of grass, and women.

The Intimacy of an Anklet

You remind me of long afternoons
that Audrey Hepburn loved in.

You're slow sangria
sitting naked on the floor.

You are my Europe.
I want to go to you.

I want to learn your language.
I want to speak in your tongue.

I want our tongues to invent a language
that only they can speak.

You remind me of a broken blues harmonica
whose blue notes don't work,

but accidentally harmonize
into warm, loose chords.

If I could I would paint
your color on my fingernails

and no amount of alcohol
would wash you off.

You are my good drunk.

You are Bob Dylan's
first guitar,

scratches deep
in the wood.

So She Could Hear It

I wanted to make her
a mixed tape,
but it was 1963.
So instead I made her
a mixed record,
with melted window blinds
and a tattoo gun.

Playing House

We used to make small houses
out of sticks. Houses
where our hands
would hold each other.
Where our hands would play,
eat mud pies, and wash
their palms in the muddy river that flowed
from the mysterious delta of my storm gutters.

We used to make small stick houses
where our hands would live whole lives—
the life expectancy
of a hand in a house
is about one day.

At night, while our hands were
clinging to each other, fast asleep
in their house, their greater bodies
would lie awake looking up at the stars
and remember
that the house was made of sticks,
and that sticks are made
of fire.

Stay

I only meant to walk you to your door
but standing in your hallway
your lips the only light...

II

Wisdom

The sword fighting was,
like most traditions, ill-advised.
The blades were real,
one a samurai, the other a Greek replica,
edges sharpened.
One issued to each man,
as well as a baseball bat
for blocking.
The first night, it was summer.
Even back then, there was a rule
that blood meant the fight was over.
Matt and RJ squared off first,
while the rest of us rolled up our sleeves
and said, this is such a bad idea.
This is such a bad idea.

Airs

We added blackberry cassis to the champagne so you couldn't tell how cheap it was, but the bubbles' tiny voices told a story of steel barrels and stems left on and, who knows, maybe a little anti-freeze for kick. We just wanted to drink enough to cloud the stains off our shirtsleeves, to disown our blisters. But someone always cut the fog by dropping an R, or tipping their chair, or trying to lick the bottom of their wineglass.

Our mother used to say, shit in one hand and wish in the other, and a bird in the hand is worth a lot more if it's the hand you wish in, and that, when you're looking through the distorted lens of a glass's bottom, to remember that all's well that ends.

Names

I called you an Eddie Izzard
You called me an Iggy Pop

You called me a scotch and soda
I called you a bottled water

I called you recycled paper
You called me recycled bike parts

You called me a track fed hobo
I called you an unplayed banjo

I called you a boot-shine shammy
You called me a well kicked shinbone

You called me a Dear John letter
I called you a bird-of-a-feather

I called you a ten foot tight rope
You called me a fall on Wall Street

You called me a crumbling corner
I called you fluorescent lightbulbs

I called you your father
You called me a bastard

Slicker

Yellow jackets are back in a big way
And you look so good when it's raining

This pond has no idea
the caliber of cake we're eating right next to it

Which, among other things,
makes you despondent

You ask me why God made crumbs
I say it's because not everyone can handle the big pieces

thicker than

saline and seawater
are cousins.
so are canals and arteries.

in Venice,
in a gondola,
I feel like blood.

I wonder how much
oxygen I can carry.
it slips between my fingers

and against my eyes
as we drift beside sidewalks
and beneath bridges,

the old cement bones
of this city--
stiff

with the sound
of footsteps.

Fog

For Darsci

I cannot tell you the ease of this fog,
because the water and the air
are a language too subtle
for my mouth to make.

I am surrounded by streetlamp
halos. From under this parking lot
the wet rock smell of earth,
and I hear cars
kissing roads
in the distance.

Night Comes Slowly

The old steel barrels sing their hollow song,
welcoming the rusty rain.

Past the pier is an ocean of storms
where water of the sky meets water of the earth.
Together, they laugh at the dirty air.

Tumble

Your rocks break my rocks,
and your bones break my bones.
What is this plant you plant--
stretching long white roots like thread?
I was never dressed so fine as in your stare.
Your eyes are in my eyes
and we breathe together
and the air smells like green hair on a willow
and your hair feels my hair like static
and the rocks break
and keep on breaking.

Where Earth Touches Sky

Outside the wise man's house
we use our coats to part the passing clouds
and peer down the mountain
of stairs, thinking of the climb back down,
and how what he said
made no damn sense.

III

We Never Swore to Do No Harm

I tried to study
the anatomy of this life,
of good hats,
my desk,
the sound of cars outside my window.
But this world,
as a body,
is a machine too detailed
for my clumsy tools.
And my body,
as a world,
has loved the sun
in so many more shapes
than just ellipses,
and burned for it.

Staring into porchlights
made in the 70's
--their bulbous glass
the color of burnt oranges--
I become nostalgic
for a time I didn't even know.
In that way,
they remind me of you.

Furnishing Speech

Without a couch,
this room feels too full of space.

The way words fill up with space
when they've been tongued too often,

until, when someone speaks,
all I see is the gap in their mouth

and conversation is just
one pause after another.

Red Chair

It's not crimson.

It's not the burnt sienna
That clings to the end of autumn.

It does not have
The stick or luster of blood.

How can I sit in this?

Bernoulli

Blisters have started to form at the base of my neck
where you kiss me often.

What's one foot more or less? you ask over
coffee at Starbucks, which we both
think is overrated, but is the only place to get
espresso this late. *After all,*
distance is distance.

I've been watching you step for ten times
ten days, and I still don't know how you
get anywhere with all those circles.

Well, there's the path of least resistance to think about,
I say, but I can already see your ankles turning;
it's time to go again. Your hand is squeezing
mine--palms full of caffeine and curvature.
I've spent a long time walking your roundabouts.

IV

Chicago

Oh the steel ribbed lungs
tunneling their bare wind down my shirtcollar
unstained by your warm red lips

Not Smoking in the Essex Inn

There is so much art in this hall.
The art of the stagger.
3am hands palming the wall
and the room key fumble.
The art of the old foot—
that frequently stepped stump
that throbs a new pulse in the rain.

Tin Man

The tin man lays face up on the stove,
legs draped across the countertop, staring
at the ceiling. The burner beneath his head
is on--heat puts his mind at ease. There
are just some joints that no oil can reach.
It's raining, and he listens to the water hit the roof.
He thinks about how much he loves the sound
that rain makes against his body.
He thinks about the hell of rust.

Getting Out of the House

I've been sleeping on another bench.
I've been keeping the stars all to myself.
They tell me stories when I'm shaking.
They tell me secrets.

I'm walled in by summer fog.
Ok maybe it's not summer,
but, you know, I have hope.
And the heavy air hides
the headlights from me.

Rails

Every couple minutes the whistle fogs a blow,
but I miss the sound of the track's knuckles.
I watched last year as they rebuilt this line—
pulled apart the bones in its hands
and replaced them with the heavy narcissistic beam—
a steady mile of steel I—smooth.
Without the train's heart-rhythm clack
and lull, I can't sleep.

I look out the window.
We pass the austere red bricks of a church
that I think must have been an asylum in another life.
The girl next to me is watching *Legends of the Fall*
and I wonder if there are any legends left alive.
It feels like falling, watching the trees
rush up from behind me--
an army of trees now, between me and the city.

V

The Smell of Earth

I

It's because we got taller!

he said, sloshing something bright orange past the rim of his glass.

Our heads are so high up now

we miss things.

II

The rows and rows and rows

of corn

shimmer happy, smiling

back at the sun its same yellow smile.

The dirt between kicked up—

restless, sipped dry

by greening leaves.

III

For the funeral,

they shaved his beard

and replaced it with

a bristle of sod.

He gnawed

the roots.

IV

Coffee sacks

hang from the ceiling

beanless—

bloated with air.

Black air, and bitter,

and strong enough

to keep you awake for days.

V

Everywhere the smell of wet.

She liked it here,
this concrete pier,
this reservoir.

She liked the pale
green light spilled
by the few
waist-high lamps.

She liked the water
and its man made
stillness.

The humid air
hung in her lungs.

Leaning against the cold stone,
she dipped her foot in
and gasped.

With plaid sleeves half rolled

Bohemian farmer,
you read Thoreau to your furrows.
You tell your seeds
that they can grow up to be more
than just wheat,
but wheat is enough.

Your father told you that the grass turned blue
because years of Kentucky sun had paled its green.
His father told him that the grass was holding its breath,
waiting for someone to come back to it.
You'll tell your son, when the time comes, that long ago
water told the land a secret
so big
the dirt was changed forever.

His name is Daniel, like Webster

He is Remington jaw-harp
He is big whiskey & rag-time
He is love out loud with both lungs
& the special gut reserve
He is the moon shining in belly
the seventy-two sweat drops
lead in the drinking water
He is dust's dry throat
He is barstool, boned beam, & foundation
He is warp in the floorboards
He is cutting rugs with wingtips like anvils
He is hay bailing & warm chaff
wine corks & barley
He is big-arm, backbone, & bull's-eye
He is unsure but sure of it
He is coming to some rescue somewhere
in his own good time
He is two fists in a pod
two bees in a blanket
wind in the weathervane
He is the windowpane left by the hail
the clapping thunder
His warning aches in old men's knees

Willing

When the moon casts its pale hook
to pull the tide in for a late kiss
that is never quite requited,
even on this
their trillionth date,

When the cricket's chirp
stretches three seconds long
from laziness,

When the railcar rides smooth
on the un-oiled track
and metal meets metal in silence,

When fountain drops plink
and flush around the skin
of coinfish in a coinpond,
and a new penny's tossed in
clothed in a murmured wish,

When we gather the large fish in our arms
and kiss their bodies,
white cooked flesh,
white cooked bones,

When boards are chalked
and, with them,
hands and pants,

When streets are chalked
with the pictographs of childhood,
then washed clean
by the spray of a hydrant
especially red in the noon sun,

When girls chant to double-dutch

the hymns of their young religion,
and their knees burn with the faith of it,

When the rain
ties the sun and sky
together in a bow,
and boys lace boots,
don slickers,
and trudge through
forests and rivers,
oceans and islands,
searching for the kind of gold
that only comes in pots,
searching
for gold that they know,
they know,
exists,

When a forest is left in shade,
When the trees begin to bend.

Twain Boxing

Thumbed way back
all day.
Breaking bindings.
Trees pressed flat
into fist tape.
You best take off
your hat & step back,
cuz this paper champ
knows origami.

You can keep walking--
shuffle on--
but let it ride and you'll
journey to Ropeland
and stay there.
Read these palms--

hard backed.
Bookmarked with ring-sweat.
Layin down a fresh press.
Hot off it.

He's gonna take you out
to burn in piles.
He's gonna run you up
the river.
He's gonna turn off his blink and read
your moves.

George Washington Carver had Huge Hands

I saw a picture of them once--
a drawing he had done himself.
Ever the naturalist, he made sure
to capture every vein, every sinuous tendon,
how they knotted on the knuckles
road-mapping grip.

Seeing his cabled fingers stretched long
across the page, I imagined
how it would feel to shake their steel,
and how carefully
they must have cupped
each peanut.

The Late Apples

The late apples
grow calloused
on the branch
that, shrugging,
casts them among
their earlier cousins--
ripe with the lying smell
of decay that hovers sweet
above their caramel-less bodies.
But the truth does not stop
the casual humdrum of bees
gathering in the mid-day
ground-apple softness.
They've gathered here
because one of their brethren
cares less about
the wind and the weather
than the rest.
He likes to fly.
And he remembers.
And when he comes back he
does his shy dance
to show the others the places
where the earth is most red.
The others love him.
They trust him.
They follow his breakdown prophecy.
But you can only say so much
with a dance,
and he longs to tell them
that there are many more tastes
than honey.

**After a Long Pause /
The Cockroach Said**

I do not remember beginning.
Although, I have seen
enough things begin and end
to know I must have started.
And to know that someday I will stop.
But that someday is not a day
to me. It is the wet dirt
that I imagine begins again
as I look out on the unbroken ocean--
it, with sourceless motion--
it, a whole hemisphere of my eyes.

Oh for the flickering hours of flies.
What hurried souls must drive
the frenzied booming of their wings.
How much more do they love
the old banana smell,
that I too love, but love
through the calloused fingers of years.

I have heard that the end is a cloud,
like all others except in shape,
and its red rain.

**A rock remembering that it's a rock, having lain too long at the bottom of a river,
asleep with the water**

How they play, the bugs on the surface, flitting in the sun, breathing deep breaths of the only oxygen they'll ever know. They make ripples, with the heat of their bodies, when they stop to rest the sky. So many winged stars springing from that ceiling, drops still clinging to their feet.

But they don't know the moon. They don't know the night still in the branches. They've never washed their faces in the fog, or opened their mouths to the humid calm, tasting its new salt. Never felt the late water, dark, and cool, and heavy.

VI

Genesis

Eden
brewed us in
big bottles,
and we passed over
God's tongue
like yeast,
dancing frantically
among
breathing wheat.

Limes

The limes tumble in your blue bowl
and stand out green against the sand
still clinging to our fingers.

Remember when you made that bowl
from beachglass we found one summer?
You only kept the blue pieces.

We ate a lime every day that year.
I still remember the squelch they made when opened
to the night's humid swell,

and your corner-eye smile
during those slow bites
letting the citrus needle your tongue.

Hot Season

Now is the time of the slow sun.
Now we bake the tan deep into our wheat bread bodies.
Now our throats relax
and one word takes all day.
When we get up we see our shapes
pressed into the sand.
Walking foot-deep in the ocean
we feel the moon's love
pull on our ankles.

* * *

On a stage built just for tonight
the DJ's spinning tranced-up
half-house old-school funk breakdowns.
James Brown never sounded so ecstatic--
his voice working hard through the crowd,
through the lactic acid crush
of our feet in the dirt
and the ebb and flow of abdomens.
Out here, twelve miles
and a corn field away from nowhere,
we feel the sky being Big Empty above us.
The stars talk down with a shimmer,
and we talk back
with our scratched vinyl lexicon
and the broken neon of cracked glowsticks,
spilling euphoria and sweat.

* * *

There is something about the air,
whole months of good air,
these days when we live on so much more than oxygen.
It is burnt hot dogs and soda air.
It is freshwater beach air.
It is the cloud crashing dampness
of morning fog.
It is 60mph and open car windows.
It is the exhausted redliners.

It is ambient music from passing cars, streetlamp speakers, and birds.
It is the second hand smoke tingle
of bars where we shoot pool
and eat hamburgers measured in pounds--
they juice down our chins and across our hands,
which we have to mop before each shot.
There is so much pleasant burning--
7:00pm stories spun in the black criss-cross of grill marks
and the music of glass meeting glass across a table--
bottles glinting in a sun that seems to set for hours,
and everything we do is sauced.

Baroque Back Yard

I bought tickets
to a cricket concerto

But the seats were
reserved for grass.

I had to stand.

Boca de Pascuales

My mother told me that the old spirits
wanted to hold onto the sun as long as they could,
so they spun it into the sand
with stitches one grain wide
and a driftwood needle.

We've been here for six days--
seven people, two chairs, and assorted rocks.
The surf is up.
At night, I say that we should use
the sun in the sand to light our fire,
but someone brought matches.

I write about what it's like here
because that's what I do,
but paper cannot hold the water,
no word can fill a wave.
And I'm sure you've tasted salt before,
but no salt tastes like the ocean
when you set your line wrong
or the pipe closes in on you
and you get the morning's first mouthful.

But the secret that gets pressed into your palms
here, your bare feet,
is that the world needs no translation.
The sun shines all day.
The waves keep coming.
There's an extra beer
somewhere.