



# *DEVOTED*

ELENA BOTTS

DEVOTED // ELEVEN POEMS

***i am sorry for frankly i had been***

walking through your mind  
which is graceless though i thought it kind—  
i wanted to help you here and here  
it is trespass and later i must take myself apart  
for being near  
the last few years has been many small deaths  
really i was not meant for people

***myrath***

the muddy orifices of mother earth  
stink will not leave our blood senseless  
without from within the depths  
we walk unknown to ourselves the surface of the moon

***the mountain cannot be taken out of sky***

though the whiteness does not separate  
like new mindlessness  
is to be here and here but not with you  
there is no you here  
only places now

where there was once sound in bones or body  
loss may be written  
into my ankle but it will wear away  
i likely will be burnt naked  
and then taken into the land or the water  
which may be as much a blessing  
as all the beautiful things i have seen

***i am afraid i have left you in that wood at midnight***

it was my mistake it was my mistake  
i don't mean to forsake you human  
in the landscape which is a form of awe.  
to see you there asleep to draw you on that paper piece  
when you were not asleep.  
to be careless now and not look and look as once  
i know if you were beautiful then, you are beautiful now  
existence is not so finite as the sun goes along the ridges  
any moment we will forget it.  
to go away for awhile, you might still be here  
not even 'caught', while also  
'gone', and 'love' and sorry—  
i have yet to awaken what i was,  
to lie deep underground  
several winters until i am made into a sound

of the snowmelt. the periphery  
of me i might still remember  
skeleton i have been made into,  
there was no intention in my making,  
my being so irrevocable,  
an accident.

### ***graduations***

everything is so living bright as summer grasses now by the little worn  
farmhouses of tivoli and the sun is still a gift but unknown as no longer  
winter shrouded old loves welling unwished for out of the ground the  
waterfall uproar and no more quiet februarys on the hudson these days so  
golden the very last like the beginning first discovery of beautiful oblivion

### ***today i felt so deeply uncomfortable about being alive in so many ways***

i cannot see the flowers that spring brought us  
only feel that there are no secrets in this weather  
to pull a sound but not hold it out to anyone  
which is how time passes  
within the water tower  
dramas are thick, merciless  
it is true, what they say, that love doesn't die  
though in embittered soil, there grows nothing  
the grandson of a statesman is in his own personal retreat

the sister a happy participant in the world  
but in the lovely darkness of late may  
i might just be forgotten by you  
there would be no surer blessing  
given that sadnesses are kept motionless  
when the world is the one moving

***crestone***

the quietness out here is so  
like sitting in the ear of a god  
there is no one i know  
just devotions to be carried out  
i seem to no longer be missing what i was  
but on and through the stars going as though i had been before  
to think of how i rang of you, am ringing a sound as cannot be heard by anyone  
in life, you're a dream of the world  
in death, the world's a dream of you

***i like the ways you are so***

i am sorry you are so—  
would you walk with me here in the nighttime,  
when it is soft, near summer  
and there are more people  
between these street lights than ever

i have seen walking?  
it is nice to put the thoughts out into open air,  
and better, that yours fall between  
as if to make something of spaces  
in your constant and undeniable motion.  
my stillnesses may go far without,  
but it sings to give to you  
for a little while.

just as there is something to be unrecognized  
in your eyes which are taken up  
by you only, looking at the world  
and at no one for long enough  
to catch, greener than a color i have seen  
outside of who is you.

is it kind, that you can pull a luminescing truth out of the air,  
not to hold it but to release  
so it might fly, dandelion, even pollinate other worlds  
with the heart of being?  
are your desperations so meaningful  
we could locate them and go there  
as if to picnic through the rainy day  
on the hill over claremont  
as the sun falls and you take my sweater.  
i would like to never have it back

and for you to wear it wherever it is you are going  
without a thought but the scent of this strange mood under the oak  
as we turn to leave  
the place where we are forever arriving.

***wanting to be kind:***

all night drive to escape a hippie gathering in georgia sold the broken car a few days  
(weeks) of complete motionlessness and application with unsure prospects the waif with  
whom i built many mockeries while hiding out from the sunshine we both escaped north  
came and left a sweet boy in philly he is worried too many friends people to see new car  
stalled stick towed then stranded in worcester released album, now tape headed to dc  
again jobless living on the bus lately suffocation of parents' houses as though inherently  
purposeless looking for a place to be alone unlost in wilderness until the cities and full  
time society catches up again if it ever does a solution to years of physical exhaustion  
spiritual writings without reference only internal resolutions but the beginnings of creating  
the next realities for the sake of the living

***thank you***

to you for existing, and also for this vast  
undeniable place not me or you  
a presence more  
which is not made of thought  
than a feeling i had sitting on the rock  
turning to fire as the sun falls

or even the constellations which are closer than ever  
in being something else

***a lock of hair***

i cannot say the you if i were to say you  
whose kindnesses are particular, cannot be exhausted  
who dares the audience along in every conversation  
which then severs language into the familiar and unwelcome.  
i cannot tell you are lost as though  
it were the fault of the spring in coming so late—overheated, willed by  
dreams where thinking is flying  
and there is always someone to get away from  
not an escape but sadness so thick we could get (as threatened) on the freight which  
was just beyond those january trees as seen from the rehabilitation center in 2016—  
were you ever alone that year, you said you wanted to be alone that year?  
you stayed through the sun's long silences, these that spilled through windows of which there  
were so many in that prison of yourself which was profound  
you imagined being taken out of your body, hoped for it every night  
but to be on earth, it is to pretend, there are things to do here  
as though this the city which has a fractured council and overlooks that river  
wasn't the universe's thoughts all condensed  
where time has its own station,  
you might leave your feeling towards me  
outside the door  
where a stray animal recognizes



a few bloodied objects that could be  
me, a squirrel, or you  
expired as simple as the sun at this roadside  
does that vulture still walk unbalanced in the wood in pursuit  
i could, maybe, forget you,  
in the coming years i might not be thinking  
or taken up by others who live curiously  
in the backgrounds of old films  
anonymous and now passed on  
like the grandson of a statesman who sank opiates  
in a shamed solitude  
we are dead, which is many things.  
which is to walk from my empty dark house to your empty dark house  
in the early hours before the light changes  
and to sit in silence as we never do.  
because living makes you so afraid  
while i am reasoned sad and regardless  
care for too many things as you do  
putting all these syllables into boxes to be found again  
in the evening, the insect orchestra will descend  
you can put these summer berries on your plate and eat them  
you can wile away this night and tomorrow's too  
you may be looking for me in these dreams  
but i cannot be looking for you.  
i am the ghost itself which is motionless  
and can be felt only when it moves from one room to the next

in devotion to a love long since extinguished  
or when i put a lock of hair in this envelope  
and pitch it into the matanzas.  
as the lights burn on, unfelt in some lonely corner of the world  
in some starry corridor it leads nowhere but from one dream to another  
i am not sure i'll ever be able to pass time very well  
as my grandmother who is never bored  
there is no lyricism in this spring, blossoming  
all the sweet boys are so full of shame if you look them in the eyes,  
not even when we walk the garden at sundown  
where once he sobbed  
with these doorways which open and open  
to wide green lawns of short thick grasses,  
and the marble pillars between which once we lay  
open to the world which when it became ours was useless.  
it is like taking a walk with you  
though it has been so long and it would be so hard really to—  
take a walk—with you—  
whereupon  
i dreamt that i was telling you of a dream i had  
in which i was meant to give you a lock of my hair.





**Elena Botts** grew up near Washington, DC, lived briefly in Berlin and Johannesburg, and is a recent graduate of Bard College in upstate New York. She is the author of the collections *we'll beachcomb for their broken bones* (Red Ochre Press), *a little luminescence* (Allbook-Books) and *the reason for rain* (Coffeetown Press). Her creative writing has appeared in dozens of literary magazines.

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