

# Seven Poems

## Mallory Tater

### Lauren Hates Roller Coasters

Her stomach has learned  
to sink on its own.  
People who seek thrills  
are depressed,  
maybe. Lauren will never  
go to Disneyland.  
When she tells us this,  
we put on funeral-voices  
but say it's overrated  
and she will be fine.  
She will be fine  
without flying  
to gendered land,  
chewing fried foods  
from sticks, hugging  
a proportionately-off mouse.  
Lauren would rather stare  
at her own breasts,  
lick a blade of grass,  
fry us  
midnight eggs  
and softened tomatoes  
over her stove.  
Lauren's mouth foams with  
vitamin Cs. Lauren watches  
bacon as it whines and curls  
slowly and without magic.

## Flattering

The beautiful woman  
at the bridal store,  
with a bowl cut  
and distressed  
clogs, walks Lauren  
to a mirror world.  
Wow—your hips are  
invisible in this.  
It's just so flattering.  
It's like  
where did you even go?  
Where are you?  
Where are you?

## Mimosas

There are dresses under my sink  
because Lauren visited for the weekend  
and I couldn't choose what to wear  
for brunch. I hate brunch.  
It's a meal where we pretend  
to be happy. It's the carpe diem of meals.

Thank you, you brought the good weather.  
It hailed on our backs on the walk home.  
Thank you for the beer.  
It rains the whole time.

I'm socialising a lot, but apologetically.  
Sorry I didn't ask  
about your roommate drama,  
your sick mom, how you cracked  
your cellphone.

There's a loud rumble from the parkade  
that makes the couch move. It scares me.  
It happens every two days. I've wanted  
to ask my landlord about it  
for two years. It sounds like men  
howling in the pipes, shaking me.

Last November, the woman next door  
lost her husband the same night  
our world turned to louder  
guns and torches and pain.  
I told myself I'd leave flowers  
at her door this year. To say sorry.  
We're all cold and sorry.  
I didn't do it. I worked seven hours  
that day folding boxes. I didn't forget.  
I just didn't do it.

## Summer Flu

On the day of the eclipse,  
Lauren coughed out phlegm  
for an afternoon.  
Her body spoke.  
It wasn't  
bright enough  
or ready  
for the most beautiful  
version of nothing.

## Beetle

The shadow of Lauren's ring  
against the dark couch  
looks like a beetle resting.  
Sometimes she scrubs her mind  
and wonders what it would be like  
to have less cleaning to do.  
If instead of anxious floors  
and walls, a ceiling, she could  
instead have a simple floor  
for a mind, littered  
with grass, the idea of blood.  
Not knowing what to do  
with our time or knowing  
what could kill us.

## Dungeness

I come home to you braising pork  
in stewed peppers and its own fat.  
Lauren texts me that no one special  
has ever made her food, that she's  
at a Mennonite diner with her mother,  
ordering water and sauerkraut.  
She's still sick but I am not.  
You tell me you've come  
to love turmeric, that I oversalt  
rice when I'm drunk. With you and me,  
we oversalt often. We'll be brined and well  
when the banks and public parks  
rot. We'll lie somewhere lovely,  
iced in salt, protesting the aging  
of bodies, the shifting of friends.  
For supper, we once slipped  
into the Pacific with my grandfather's net.  
We twisted our tee-shirts up to our armpits,  
pretended we could not be burned,  
caught four dungeness crabs.  
One pinched your wrist.  
They twitched in my lunchbox.  
We walked back to shore, through  
algae tresses, rinsed salt off our legs  
with the hose, placed the crabs on the grass  
to measure which bodies  
held more meat than other bodies,  
which bodies to put inside our bodies.  
I'll always want to hold you.

## For Lauren Again

Why have I always bitten my fingernails raw?  
I spend more on band-aids than books.  
You overdose and text me you're in the hospital  
but just for a check-up, waiting for me  
to reply BULLSHIT and I do.  
We've known everything  
is terrible since we were forced in school  
to take a Canadian Families course and learned  
divorce can cause fever. The sweat stains  
beneath our teacher's armpits and kneecaps.  
At lunch he ate cold chicken wings alone  
behind the portables. Once, he offered you  
a drumstick, told you never to love  
or smoke, be decent. You told me  
your pug would die at age four.  
He's eleven now and needs you.  
I don't know that's true, but when  
he scratches your mother's flower pots,  
filled with daisies from your hospital stays,  
he at least knows your scent.  
I will place band-aids on my fingers forever.  
I will place band-aids on mostly my middle fingers.  
I chew them when I'm alone without wanting to be.  
You're alone without wanting to be.  
You draw portraits of elderly women,  
pruned and tortured and beautiful.  
My favourite—her index finger bending  
her lower lip open, her eyes slick  
from onions or dying. I love watching you  
sketch necks and chins but I'm not sure why.  
One day, I ask what the woman is thinking.  
You text six days later—  
She's not.  
She's just like that.  
She just is.  
I don't know.