**SURVIVAL**

Trying to explain to your mother that no,

you haven’t seen your car in two weeks,

but you’re doing the best that you can

and yes, you realize the situation is shitty

because you feel it like the swelling of a

broken bone, like the arrival of an incoming

storm, but there’s just not much you can do

when your illness is like an all-seasons allergy

that alleviates on the spur of the breeze and

worsens as predictably as snowy weather;

Trying to explain to your professor that you’re

doing the best you can but the homework just isn’t

getting done because the readings keep tumbling

out of your sagging hands, your resolve crumbling

like dead leaves in a closed fist, eyes aching

for vivid sunlight in a world of pastel grays

and watercolor blues, and the computer screen is

leeching the color from you, its stark whites

glaring out at you like exposed bone;

Trying to explain to your boss that no,

it technically isn’t your fault that you overslept again,

because the sun didn’t go down when

it was supposed to so your eyes couldn’t shut

until 4 AM when clouds started passing overhead,

and even then your brain wouldn’t stop

emulating the universe, looping over and over

in the same ellipses, cycling through all

the same meaningless presets;

Trying to explain to your father that yes,

you realize how socially privileged you are but

even the richest soil can’t sprout a rose from

*[no line break]*

the bulb of a plant that’s putrescent at its core,

shriveling from the inside out;

for some bulbs it’s enough to simply be

cradled by the earth in the deep warm dark

where the sunlight can’t burn

your eyes and

nobody can pick or stare

at your leaves.

Can’t call out “lethargic” from work

can’t stay home “depressed” from school;

and no one understands when you tell them

that you’re doing your best when your best

is simply showing up and not taking root

in a bed and a dark room like some kind of

four-limbed moonflower, exposing itself

to the world only in

shadowed glimpses and

surreal flashes;

no one’s sympathetic when you describe

your current state of being as “wilted”,

insides skewed separate from the outer stem

and head drooping like a shaded sunflower,

deprived, deserted, desperate for relief;

a dried-out bulb disconnected from its

petals, leaves slumping under the weight

of prolonged exposure to gray skies--

what do you do when living

on a strictly day-to-day schedule

is just too hard for you?