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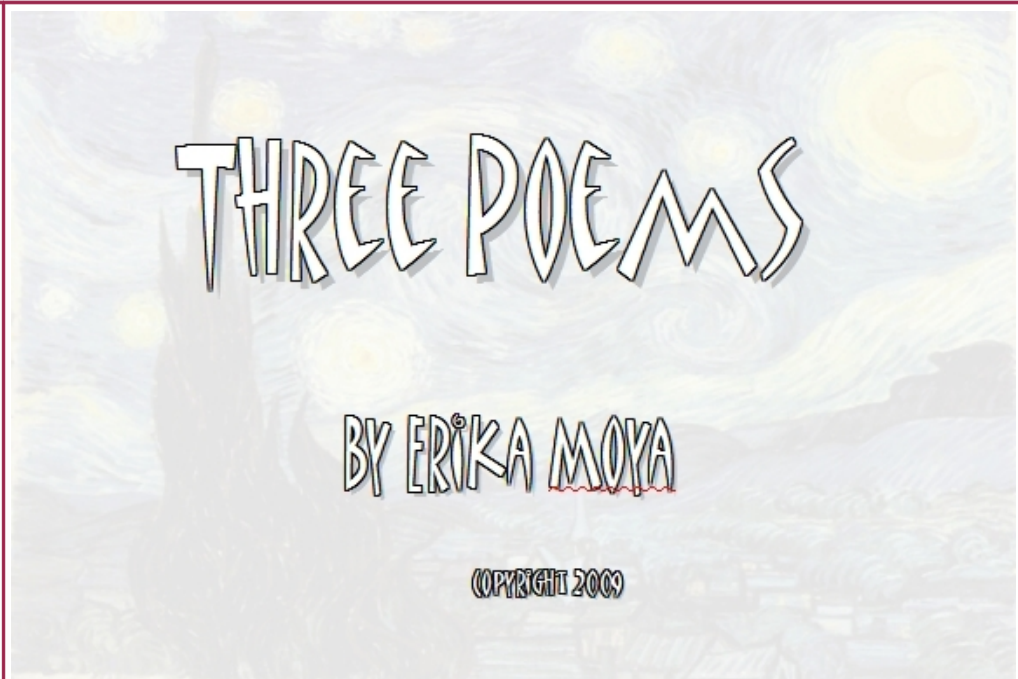
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### **father**

In a pitch too high for the ear to hear,  
you exclaim your love.

The whites of your palms are smooth stones  
heavy in the air,

half finished attempts to communicate.  
We falter, start, finish, and then begin again.

Mute affectations for one another's wit.  
We step into one another's gait, holding up  
life by the suspenders.

And life has never tasted this good. These mornings are  
reminiscent of being five and getting up slowly.

Eyes open. Mouth yawns.  
Legs heaved over the side of the bed.

Everything is glycerin coated. But I don't have to tell you that.  
The sidewalk sparkles beneath its cobblestoned surface,  
carbon dating of gum, holding us up and we pushing back down, an  
affectionate squeeze  
on a forearm.

In a pitch too low for me to hum, the wind whistles by  
caressing shoulder high branches pregnant with leaves.

In a few months it will be a year since your death.

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Did you have days like this?

Days that moved like honey, Polaroid snippets, we shove them in our pockets only to forget and find them later.

Days that feel like college, kindergarten, or seeing your mother first thing in the morning, fresh bread and unbridled laughter.

Days where we do nothing, but let our thoughts meander. Let them hike on non-paths.

Barefoot and hungry. Looking out for new material.

Days when there is so much left to explore.

I know you are not here. But the warmth the sun leaves behind makes me wonder.

If you are not behind my shoulder, behind my eyes, the pause that leaves me breathless, once again five and in awe.

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**you say i have a good mouth**

but it is only good when it is with yours.

Gently toying the in between where I can feel

your breath hot on my lips.

Your mouth is only good in smile.

A reflection of my own,

reminding me that we are only as good as what we make,

and what we build.

You say I have a good mouth.

Two lines of flesh with teeth behind. Small

apatite warriors, who bite and chew

to leave reminders, of what we knew at the moment

and what we felt. That immediacy of the flesh, the urge to consume, a necessary evil.

Who said love was like fire never knew its falling forward and then coarse retreat.

It is much more like a wave. Forever falling forward, forever taking a few leaps backwards, never fully remembering from past lovers, that what goes on forever, will continue always and forever.

Never retracing the patterns that leave small tokens of existence behind,

seashells which litter a bed of pale sand

and the tangled emerald hair an angry mermaid left behind.

You say I have a good mouth

I say you as well. Glad to have made its acquaintance, happy that

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it has become so familiar a feature to my face.

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**these gems**

some friends become uncomfortable when I tell them he's leaving. They ask  
me have I tried to work it out  
and to that i let there be a dumb pause of silence  
of course i have i say but you cant  
force someone to love you.  
There are the silent ones who send you an  
email brief  
as in are you ok?  
or leave a voice mail at 3 in the morning knowing  
you'd be in a whiskey induced coma  
and unable to answer  
the so so few who do want to listen  
become these jewels  
you keep wrapped in a black crushed velvet cloth  
the kind they use at jewelry shops  
you keep them warm in your hand  
covered inside a shirtsleeve or in a pocket  
and you take them out only when you are alone.

Asking them in a quite tone  
will i be ok?

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**Erika Moya's** work has previously appeared in *Qaartsiluni*, *The Smoking Poet*, *The Holly Rose Review*, *Toronto Quarterly*, and *Mosaic: Art and Literary Journal* of the University of California Riverside. She is a native of Los Angeles and currently attends the MFA program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.