the church is so pretty. i wish i could go in. but they only let members enter.
do you believe in god?
he lifts the corner of his lips, shakes his head.
no. i don’t believe in heaven or hell either.
me neither.
i kind of like that there’s nothing after death.
this time, he frowns.
you’re not upset by that? that there’s nothing after this?
what’s the point then? in a hundred years, no one will even remember us. it just
makes me wonder
why?
i think it’s comforting.

he doesn’t really understand what i mean. i can tell by the way he turns back toward the cliff. i
don’t know what to say. so i do too. the city looks different now. or i guess i wouldn’t know, i am
too young. but i have chosen to put my trust in the hands of the artist who, right underneath,
says there is too much here and where are the trees going? and how can we possibly add more to this
world?

a couple days later, we lay silent, side by side
i am a little distracted
by the brush of his fingers over mine
and the color of his eyes,
the same color as the art i took him to see,
with just a touch of green as if
the trees have come to life in his eyes
        i have something weird to tell you
he says. his accent is thicker now
i listen carefully

he told me every time he imagined something, it would disappear. he noticed it when he was 7, when his cousins wanted to continue playing Pirate Ship with Legos from the day before and it suddenly didn’t exist anymore. not that he couldn’t remember it, he said, memories were different. it was as if it wasn’t real, which... it wasn’t. but when you’re a kid, your imagination feels real, and for the moment it is. it’s more real than taxes and jobs and school. your imagination is in your head and that’s where you are and so it’s real to you. but he told me this wasn’t true for him. that it was real in the moment and gone the next day.

so now i wonder
does this mean that tomorrow he won’t remember us?
i know it’s different, actual events from imagined events but what about feelings?
feelings aren’t a real, tangible thing either feelings are in that in between space not quite physical but not quite imagined.

(is this all a dream for him?)

in 2 months, these moments will pass a threshold one that moves me farther from him with each passing second until eventually it will be longer without me than with me and it will always always be less than everything else
he told me that he didn’t like forgetting what he imagined
so he did this thing
created an alternate world, he called it,
where everything he did that wasn’t real-
stories, movies, books, imagined pirate ships-
had a place
everything he did, he had to think
about how it related to that first story he created

as a kid he read harry potter
(in french of course)
and he liked it so much that the alternate world became hogwarts
(with pirates i guess)

i cannot imagine what it’s like
for what you imagine to not be real
i know

i know

it didn’t happen to you
but it happened in you
and who’s to say that’s not something?

(you apparently, for you it’s not enough.)

and all these things are in one place for me

feelings and dreams and imagination and memories and art and moments
moments like standing on a cliff
overlooking the La Jolla Vista View
and walking into the eucalyptus trees
while the heady scent of lemongrass
keeps you tethered

moments that are shared-
watching the clouds snuggle up to the sun,
the church standing tall, demanding attention,
a million possibilities, hiding in trees and fences and walkways
entire worlds depicted with just a few, simple black lines

everything in the city is there-
*almost* everything.
one tiny dot is missing,
one barely visible in the skyline

        this is our shared moment
        looking out at art
        underneath more art

we are imagining the same moment in that tiny dot
where we first met,
and for the first time i understood
what it meant for the stars to align

        (will this moment fade too?)

you said it’s real, it happened, if you can put it in this alternate place

        moments aren’t imagination
        moments aren’t imagination
        moments aren’t imagination
if you re-imagine something, which side of the line does it fall?
if you re-imagined a moment, does it disappear too?

(if you re-imagined us
would we disappear?)

moments aren't imagination

but moments are made of feelings
and moments exist in dreams
and moments live in memories
and moments are art

and moments can be imagined

so now i wonder if the next time
lemongrass floats through the air
he will think of me
and remember how i smiled at
all his mispronunciations,
how he teased me for feeling nervous,
and the way his eyes held mine.

i wonder if he will re-imagine
our first kiss, just beyond that cliff,
on an old, stone bench
in the midst of the eucalyptus grove

i wonder which i will be
a permanent resident of that alternate world,
or just a faraway dream of something that didn’t happen
imagine
he says

imagine being 70 or 80 years old
and suddenly waking up
and not remembering your life
good or bad, you just don’t remember.
that’s what i think death is going to be like.

i don’t understand
he shrugs

it’s the same as imagining
the next day it isn’t real
life is like that
one day you wake up, or don’t i guess, and
it isn’t real anymore
it doesn’t matter
do you really think that? that life
doesn’t matter when we die?
of course. we’re not there to make it matter anymore

i don’t know what to say.
so i lay there and imagine
what it would be like to wake up
and not remember standing on a cliff
looking down at line intersecting line
until an image forms-
one that includes our love story
in between soft strokes of a brush,
hiding behind spring greenery,
tucked safely into a building
you almost can’t see.
is he right?
does that moment die
when we die?

i want to believe that is the point of *La Jolla Vista View*.
maybe it’s selfish
to think this piece is here to capture these moments,
to capture us,
before he is gone-
but maybe it’s not just us.
maybe the artist shared a moment with someone too
someone who couldn’t seem to grasp onto things the way others could
and maybe he couldn’t find the line between real and imagination either
so he moved moment from feeling to dream to memory to art
so that it would never not be real

(not just a comment
on urban sprawl but
a delicate piece of metal
meant to rest
at your fingertips,
holding a string of moments,
waiting for the touch
of the next imaginist.)

when you first told me this, i was fascinated, enthralled
how strange, for a mind to not hold onto imagination,
tell me more

(and now all i can imagine
is not being imagined)
please, tell me

    if our moments are imagined
        are they not then real for you?
            will you reimagine me?
                will i have a place in you?
                    will you visit me there?
                        when we are worlds apart,
                            if we cannot be real
                                can we at least be imagined?