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My heart is like a butterfly
Delicate, gentle,
Flutters when it sees people
Drawn to bright, colorful flowers
Wanting something sweet
Easy to scare off

- Erica Caleca

I remember the early spring nights where I’d be
in the passenger side of the car
laughing as we sang along to the radio
switching CDs as hours passed
looking out into the sunset lit sky
the pink hues
the purple tints
the blue waves
the orange bursts
the yellow shades
all welcoming us as we traveled
comforting me in this blissful haze where all I
needed was you and the sky

but I remember those times as I stare at the
burned pages before me
waiting for our next adventure because it had
been awhile since we danced
the memories now too rancid to bear
you never came back
you never came back for one last drive
one last early morning surprise as we drove
through the night
I’d wish you’d danced
these thoughts burn me like acid as I looked at
the navy sky sparkling with stars, at the pages
brown with age, collecting our memories in ink
and photographs

it wasn’t long before I stopped hoping you’d
come back

- Erica Caleca
aquarium jellyfish

at the cross, where
i saw the light

- Jocelyn Martinez

- Michael Gregory
black

Blacker than ash
No lighter than dusk
A heart shrouded
clouded
starting to rust

Feigned functionality
While yours gets used
I’ll take all the blame
But blame the abuse

- Christa Normandia

blackpowder

your father with your uncle’s old blackpowder
gonna polish it up, he says, make it pretty again.

your father, hometown legend,
jump started a motorcycle with a juicy fruit wrapper
back when they were tin foil.
when he was a boy with a bat
and bright future.

back when kids were allowed to be kids
and he would come home to star trek, the rifleman,
black and white.
and filipino mother, endlessly wise
who grew up bruising her knuckles in school.
pushed her boys into the church and found god somewhere,
somewhere.

your father’s baby brother,
tattoos and long raven hair.
ashes ashes ashes
from dust and to dust
and all dust in between.

blackpowder.
 thick black powder in his lungs.
the rifle in your father’s hands
the hands that could fix the stars if they had to,
pull machine from the grave.

but this?
baby brother resting, nestled in wood
your father’s hands cannot unwind.

- Jolie Decker
No one ever looks up at the night sky
And wonders what it would look like without the stars.
The moon, a beautiful welt in the air,
Is never questioned for its presence, but rather praised.

Millions have spent interminable hours and days
Staring up at the heavens,
Studying them,
Making their lives and livings from the stars.

When the clouds roll in,
The beauty and mystique disappears,
Covering the gentle pockmarks of the sky.
No one ever wishes for a cloudy night of stargazing.

Diseased and depressed, trouble and tattered though the world is,
The stars are what we scrounge for after a day of unrest.

These stars,
These imperfections make the sky beautiful.

Your scars,
Your imperfections make you beautiful.

Your freckled, acne-ridden face,
Your scabbed and marked skin,
Your peeling and rough patches,
Are the moon to me.

And your scars,
Are my stars.

Please don’t let it be cloudy tonight.

- Jaclyn Baccarella
derealization: now on broadway!

the moon is sticky with wet paint,
dripping.
stage crew working fast,
pulling away the ground behind me and
placing it in front.
the sun is swaying on a string.
i can hear it creak,
i swear!

are you like the puppets?
you don’t feel the same as they do.

they are:
stitched together.

you are:
actor without a script.

paint cans tipped,
spilling me all over you
lukewarm.
am i real?

there’s the dream where everything is too close.
and here’s the ginger ale, the one that tastes like clockwork.
this is where the fault lines blur into parallels.

the jailbirds are singing now:
“let us down, let us down.
we just want to die already.”

- Jolie Decker
The ghastly hand of death has rung my bell.
My blood is freezing, flowing slowly now.
I’m struck with sounds of nauseous, noxious knells.
The spectral beacon tempts my sombre brow.
My soul, my essence, loves this natural life;
This natural life has never wept for me.
Does no elixir halt the eldritch knife,
Whose blade shall slash the roots of every tree?
My world— it fades much like a closing scroll—
But lo!—the raging beating of the heart
Is the incessant knocking of the soul!
And here’s my single wish before I part:
I pray the final pulse of all my doom
May echo ere I pass unto my tomb.

- Frank Colabella
here but there

- Michael Gregory

iron poisoning

it all starts with the hyena boy
and you.
combing the salt from his hair
setting the scene with toy dinosaurs
watch how they fight!
with their plastic legs sunk in dessert

or maybe it’s the boy
with the star on his chest
now where did he put that torch for you?
ah, there with the lighter in his palm
sipping smoke from a plastic bottle

then there is boy from before
light in every sense
brought you gifts of peach and warmth
“oh, but he was such a nice boy!”
so what! you want to yell
where did that ever get any of us?

the common denominator / you look at all of them with pity
spilling from your mouth
dripping from your canines
you want to spit in their food
slide the plate across the table, fox-like
instead you choke down as much as you can
until it begins to taste like copper
how much of someone else’s blood can you swallow?

- Jolie Decker
The world is a blur.  
Hazy gray silhouettes against the outer wall.  
One hand pressed firmly to the bricks-  
the other on the nozzle.  

The fire roars;  
A mighty lion poised to strike,  
determined to deplete everything in its path  
to rubble and ash  

Heat.  
Harsh heat that is repelled by the gear  
but burned into the mind.  
The nozzle grows heavier in hand.  
The cylinder strapped to the back bears down;  
A painful reminder that they're human,  
in the face of a superior foe.  

And the pass device beeps.  
Awful, nightmare-inducing beeps.  
It's a warning: Air supply is low  
And time is running out.  

But the team pushes on.  
Urging forward with reassuring taps on the boot;  
The world gets brighter,  
illuminated in the face of destruction.  

The nozzle is charged, and opens fire.  
Raining upon the flames,  
and knocking the team back with its force.  
The water is strong;  
stronger than fire and man.  

The world becomes clear  
when the fire is quenched  
and the team strips their heavy burdens.  
Heart pounding, lungs empty,  
muscles aching, sirens sounding.  

But they are at ease.  
They've escaped the lion's den.  
The fear burning deep in their hearts  
was drowned in their victory.  

- Dana Sobel  

Among the many species of the sphere,  
A scourge of sorrow seeps from days of yore,  
Inclined to harry man forevermore  
While other creatures shed the vile leer  
With vigor fortified throughout the years.  
Without majestic wings or piercing roars,  
The man is forced to wander and implore,  
But fortune grants a more refined frontier—  
The greatest gift within the universe—  
A grand imagination whirls around  
Within the mind, preparing to astound,  
Concocting potions to impede the curse,  
So though it's true we suffer and lament,  
We also dream and wonder with content.  

- Frank Colabella
mercy’s keys

“Greatest of these is love”
Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:13, New Testament Bible

Respect that is love,
is key of these, for
without respect
compassion is pity,

without compassion
justice is rigidity,

without justice
integrity is cowardice,

without integrity
service is directionless.

Fulfillment in service is mercy
fully unlocked, too as keystone.

Mercy inward builds our characters’ arch,
outward vaults our community’s architecture.

- Anne Tabor-Morris

mother of mercy

- Michael Gregory
mother said

I fell beneath, above my head
And left before my mother said.
Explored and bored, they used me up-
A woman child with soul corrupt.

Had I known above my head
Encircled was what mother said:
“Too much, too soon, too sour, too sweet,
Too young to digest what you eat.”

I bought the tears that I befriended,
With the fears that never ended.
Rewinding to what mother said,
I lifted up a weary head.

Woman child has finally rested
Conscious of what’s been ingested.
Wrong had left, and then was right.
I purged my body of the night.

- Luana Fahr

movement lying down

I wish I knew why I wept.
I wish I never cared.
I wish I collected a check,
and always moved forward without looking back.
I move so quickly, a pace so fast and
the day goes by,
but there are times when the movement slows
and thoughts catch up, then I start to cry.

My mind so full of things to fix,
I cannot sleep.
What should I be doing?
Where did I go wrong?

I weep for things I cannot control,
I weep for the things that need to get done,
But most importantly,
I weep for sleep.

- Jo Ann Cummings
A bat flies out into the night,  
Into a bleeding crimson light  
Extending as the sky attunes  
And chokes the brilliant, glaring moon.  
A tarn reflects the gloomy scene,  
The bat’s undaunted glide and mien.  
A fish leaps out and tries to snare  
The bat into its liquid lair  
But fails its plan and falls the same  
Into the lake from where it came.

A moth alights upon a tree  
And stares into the starry sea,  
Enticed by bright celestial gleams,  
Bedight with every lustrous beam.  
But barren branches house a blight  
Of pure, unruly appetite.  
The bat attacks the lonely soul,  
Devouring antennae whole,  
And hastens back on toward its cave,  
Departing from the recent grave.

- Ariana Mexquititla
The mouth of the mountain is near.
The chill of the night is severe.
The screech of a bird can be heard;
Its figure is distant and blurred.
But swooping in, now it extends
Its ebony pinions that blend
With darkness and shadows of trees.
It plunges its talons with ease,
And fastens the bat to its doom,
Forsaking an obsolete plume.

Now the air of the night turns immobile and dry
As the owl ascends to the glittering sky.
And the moon, as it threatens, evinces a pall,
For it peers like a luminous eye over all,
But the owl continues to spiral and soar
Like the Pegasus limned in the pages of lore—
And a requiem croons from the birds in the air,
As the beasts of the land send a howl and a glare
To that circular ruby of scintillant light,
To that blood-bedewed moon of the merciless night.

- Frank Colabella

on my watch

I watched you as you pursed your lips
And counted on your fingertips.
You’d write, and then your eyes would shift.
Your neck would stretch, your head would lift.
You sniffled and you sometimes sneezed
And wiped your nose upon your sleeve.
Sometimes you would twirl your hair
And act as if I wasn’t there.
You held your hand across your head
And watched the clock as hours sped.
Erase, erase, and leave no trails
Of sweat, regret, and bitten nails.

- Luana Fahr
He drifted and wandered,
hoping and waiting,
While searching for something,
that felt worth attaining.
Now chaos and terror - his ship's run aground!
as he looks for a place to stay cozy and sound.

He once had a vision of what he would become,
ahead of the pack, second to none.
Adhering strictly to the path,
a conditioned soldier, he never fell back.

Yet now he stands listless,
his belief shattered,
With his faith on the run,
The price no longer matters.

He tries and again to make sense of it all,
why he's broken inside and the pain of his fall.
Betrayed by those who taught him his faith,
now filled with demons, monsters and wraiths.

Unable to connect and let the light in,
He drowns out the emotion with madness and sin.
Using whatever it takes to maintain,
no longer the one his friends knew would abstain.
Every lust and desire indulged in at last,
He's barely alive,
But living life hard and fast.

He pushes away all those who dare,
to question his ways and show that they care.
Pretending when needed so as to not disappoint,
while provoking himself to the boiling point.
Yet he cannot escape the anguish and fear,
his constant companion, ever so near.

He's living life only half alive,
it's an unceasing struggle to recover his drive.
Fueled by anger, fear and frustrations,
he's got no direction, lacks all motivation.
Not wanting to hurt those closest to him,
Feels he can never release what he's keeping within.

Scouring the boulevards,
alleys and streets,
Of each city he finds himself,
hoping to meet;
The one who will show him the answers he seeks,
to end the confusion disturbing his sleep.

He's longing to be the one to receive,
some stroke of luck that will bring a reprieve
He wants to return to what he once believed,
that existence has meaning beyond what we perceive.
Still looking for answers in all the wrong places,
He cannot accept the truth he now faces.

That playing both sides of the fence,
has left him worn out, he's restive and tense.
The choice he confronts leaves him filled with dread,
so he pushes all thoughts of it out of his head.
Walking a tightrope, his eyes are a window,
to the state of his soul, perpetual limbo.

- Yakov Boroosan
sandcastles

The rain was pounding that day. Not simply falling as it would any other day. It pounded so hard that each raindrop felt like a ball of hail as it hit the ground. Normally, I loved the sound of rain, as it calmed me down, but this pounding rain did anything but. We knew it would be the worst we’ve seen in years. We knew it was going to be the worst storm New Jersey has ever seen. We knew, but we didn’t want to believe it.

Yet I couldn’t believe that in the middle of Hurricane Sandy, I saw my brother, Jesse, wearing his raincoat, ready to embark in the deadly superstorm.

Jesse originally was in denial from the start. Truth be told, I didn’t know just how bad it would be either. But Jesse really had no clue. He was 6 after all, what kid his age would have experienced a superstorm? A storm that could knock down trees and destroy buildings sounded ridiculous to him. He even joked that he wanted to go to the beach after the storm.

Jesse’s second favorite thing was the beach, with his first being videogames. If he could, he would try and do both. He loved the waves and the sand of the Jersey Shore. He adored the calming ocean and the clean air that filled his lungs. His favorite part of the beach was sandcastles, as since he couldn’t swim yet, it was something that kept him entertained. I taught him how to build his first one, as Mom was busy taking pictures and Dad was laying around in the sand. It was our favorite memory together.

Mom and Dad weren’t there for the storm as they left for a conference they had to attend for the weekend out of town. They thought the storm wasn’t going to affect us so they left me in charge. I was in college, and I wasn’t known for throwing parties, so my parents trusted me. The day before the storm they both packed, got ready for the conference, and headed out.

Once the rain started pounding, all we could do was sit and watch the weather report. We didn’t want to, but the storm was all we could think about. Jesse kept pacing as we listened to the frightening reports, seeming, as they always tried, to scare us. If it was their objective to frighten us into evacuating, they were doing a damn good job. The last thing my brother saw on the television was a newscaster standing outside in the blistering winds and blinding rain, reporting on the dreaded hurricane.

Immediately after, the television shut down and the power went out. Jesse went from terrified to panic-stricken. I told him to calm down and play his games. He didn’t hesitate and rushed downstairs.

At this point I couldn’t help but worry about Mom and Dad a little either. I called them to try and see if they would answer. A simple “hello” or “we’re okay” just to calm my brother’s nerves. Ring. No answer. I dial again. Ring. Ring. I hear their voicemail once again. As I finish dialing a third time, I see my brother, Jesse, dressed in a yellow raincoat.

“What in the hell do you think you’re doing?!” I asked, as I could only wonder what stupid reason Jesse had for even considering going outside.

“I’m going to find Mom and Dad,” he said with a shaky and scared voice. I laughed at him after he said it. I thought out of all the stupid things my brother has done, this one was the one that would top them all.

We argued all day and night, yet he insisted that he wanted to go out to find them. I tried to explain that Mom and Dad were a lot farther than next door. I yelled at him, trying to explain to him why he needed to stay inside.

“Are you stupid?” I yelled. “This is the worst storm in years and you want to kill yourself and go out in it?! How much of a moron are you?!”

It was after I said that when Jesse began to cry. I wanted to apologize, but he immediately ran upstairs.

The only source of light available was a candle, along with the additional flashing green lights from the exploding transformers. It looked as if an alien light show was happening in our front yard. I thought even though it caused so much destruction that it might be a nice light show for Jesse.

I couldn’t stop thinking about how I made Jesse cry. I only lasted ten minutes before I headed up to his room again. I walk up there with the candle filling the hallway with light. I noticed that not only was the door open, but that the rain seemed louder than usual. I shined the light on Jesse’s room.

I look over to see the unmade bed of my brother, along with an open window and curtains blowing against the harsh winds. I heard a tree pounding on the ground. The raincoat was gone.

- Dennis Gribben
the dance

- Meaghan Moore

the long walk to redemption

- Michael Gregory
Gallant postures, firm and daunting
Form upon a checkered region,
Scrutinized by giants haunting
Every member of the legion.
Bishops, knights, and lofty towers
Guard the king and queen from peril,
Led by pawns of modest power
Garbed in ragged, worn apparel.

Horses gallop, charged with ire;
Swords and bucklers filled with glory
Clash beneath the noble spires,
Piercing through the territory.
Many prudent strikes and forces
Wear the valiant adversaries,
Urging both to change their courses
While remaining keen and wary.

Vapors of a potent aura
Rise into the ether slowly—
Sighted down among the flora
Waits a pawn abandoned wholly.
Captured is the helpless being;
Poisoned is the opposition.
Frenzied madness leads to fleeing;
Triumph is the acquisition.

- Frank Colabella
the road

I spotted in the auburn sky
A road connecting me to Him,
And on the wings of butterflies
I rose and flew and searched within.
Right there and then, I spotted it,
And understood how I’m connected
A candle that another lit
Transfers the title “resurrected.”
In the clouds of everlasting,
Rose the smoke like rolling thunder,
I could see some angels passing,
Mending what was put asunder.
On a polished silver lining,
Rode a Lord with robes of white.
On a wooden table dining,
The Twelve were in my line of sight.
Did He come to save the world
Or to alleviate the strife?
A flag of peace had been unfurled
I now know things about this life.
All roads lead us to the One
Who guides the road I found today.
Light from a begotten Son
Has forced the night to turn to day.

- Luana Fahr

the witches rode hyenas

you are crying in your dad’s sweatshirt.
the boy is lanky and he makes you laugh, but he
is not your boy
he is soft and you want to pull him into you every
chance you have, but you
can’t.

you have heard what he is, what he’s
done
you don’t care.

and this hyena boy, left his girl black and blue,
says “you are me.”
okay, fine, so what if you are him but with tongue
sharper than fists?
what does that mean for the both of you?
most people are bad people,
and you are probably one of them.

he says to you “meet him, Muzik.”
he says “you look nice today.”
you don’t understand the games.

you watch him singing with his hands on the wheel,
know you could spend your life in the passenger seat.

he pulls you into him instead of the other way round,
not in a way you understand
and you’re okay with it, strangely,
something in the ambiguity is comforting.
you are crying again, in hyena boy’s shirt this time
nothing is fair, except it is
the universe backlashes and that is
the only thing you can depend on, really.

calm down, restless girl
the hyena is only having fun,
can’t you too?
you dance around each other with grace
keep it that way.

but there it is again
thunderstorm heat like the storm that
opened you up over the weekend,
spilled you over his owl print sheets.

you are free but you don’t feel
free
the universe has got you trapped, don’t you know?
you cannot escape the person you’re supposed to be.

- Jolie Decker

- Samantha Widmer
To the future,
The world’s problems are not mutually exclusive;
They’re amalgamations of our own creation,
Forged together by human ignorance.
A growing mold under the foundation of society, rapidly compromis-
ing the structural integrity of the entire system.
And what do we do? Turn our greedy heads from the monster that
we feed with dusty dollar bills?
Wait for a hero to rise among common men and rid humanity of
its burden and quake in fear when the hero succumbs under the
pressure?
No:

For you, I pray not for the presence of a hero,
But for the presence of an actor.
A catalyst for change to inspire the common folk-
To take steps towards greatness.
The writers building bridges of words to cross from the world of
blissful blind eyes
to a more promising tomorrow.
The speakers screaming from the rooftops of buildings, echoing the
Earth’s silent cry for help.
They are not warriors with swords and guns, but with the greatest
powers of all:
A heart that aches with the need to save the world from harm
And the courage to voice their fears to the judgemental ears of the
masses.

To the future,
The persistence of self-centered, greedy ideologies manifesting in
the stacks of tattered currency ruin you
I apologize for what humans have done,
And what they will continue to do.
Just as the world turns, people will discover more ways to strip
you, demean you, and shorten your lifespan.
But you will survive,
because there is always an actor,
An actor to rise to take compassion on you,
and provide service in their own personal skill set,
And who wants to help you thrive again.
All you need is one to speak about peace and sustainability,
And they will call an army to your side.
To the future: You will survive.

- Dana Sobel
Gave coffee kisses, barely spoke.  
An Ivory tower up in smoke.  
They did not see from where they stood  
A hatred masked as something good.

A message from a crimson sky  
Was read that day, and said good-bye.  
And then imploded into dust,  
A blend of people, steel, and rust.

With arms outstretched, some even flew  
To those they loved or those they knew.  
A cough, a scream, some silent prayers,  
A grim parade upon the stairs.

A tear that fell upon the ash,  
Was wiped out in a photo flash,  
A city left devoid of life,  
A silent husband left a wife.

“If I should die while I’m awake...”  
Was just a prayer said by mistake.  
See you later, see you never.  
Saying “Miss you” meant forever.

- Luana Fahr

- Samantha Widmer
untitled

- Samantha Widmer

valentine

- Meaghan Moore
vanone #9

- Valerie Vanone

wearable art poster

- Valerie Vanone
you know me and you don't

- Valerie Vanone

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