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*I sit in sad cafes serving second cups - when the sun turns a blind eye  
and windows need glasses...*

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***the sad cafe/***

where dead poems are born  
cutting ink on tabletop teeth,  
carve out the existence  
of their extinction -  
like an impatient memory  
willing to forget

there are no secrets here -  
words talk among themselves  
breaking bread with silence;  
coffee bums cigarettes  
sounding like spoons

our meals are light,  
appetizers as desserts  
rummage phonetic foreplay  
(life isn't much but it's a living)

the task of oxygen is an arduous one,  
no exhale clouds this thought  
once the smoke clears:  
we spend most of our lives  
conversing with ourselves

trespassers in our own calling -  
we don't knock on wood  
but build houses out of splinters

my exits hesitate  
but the door relents,  
I pocket my prayers  
and the stars  
meet me half way

the dark only stumbles in light,  
a puzzle where the cracks show  
- and all the beautiful losers  
survive their dream's  
disfigurement of sleep,  
scars bear the hiding  
but poems smile just once

ripples of rapture from leftover language  
wrapped in the blue mantle  
of black bibles

what use throbs this extra life  
naked under shadow's clothing  
when skid row prophets  
swell to sidewalk psalms –  
open blood in bottles  
with a church key

in a flash!  
I've lost all the buttons  
on my raincoat  
for the last dance with the rain –  
clear notes in discord strung out  
by needle's small drops of poison  
while night arches its back  
to the music in chance  
and drunken angels  
sleep with sailors  
for a song

||.

*the sweet poison of her small perfume, the drunk of thirst,  
still wet in my memory – but I'm on poetry's bad side,  
playing music in the wrong bars, penned by a sad surprise  
– where my sentence starts at the end of this writing...*

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***slow dance/***

hammering nails all the way  
down the line into the fire –  
flashin' automatic in a thunderstorm

steel jockey hoppin' runaway:  
ghost between shadows  
clicking heels in railroad spikes

scratchin' by on second skins  
doin' the bone dance –  
tango till we're sore,  
till a bullet smokes the floor

save the kiss for last, all fades after that...  
*except the music our silence plays*

black-eyed blues street talkin' jazz:  
brass knuckle band  
shootin' craps with loaded fists

fishbone graveyards in hustler's church –  
fish out of waters flopping on pavement  
reeled over shoulders not worth the salt

you've sung me a midnight choir!  
*I shook out my prayers  
to dust off a song –*  
punchin' my way out  
of this paper bag town,  
concrete cowboys & cardboard lovers

whipin' that slow train to New Orleans,  
a one-way dance for two –  
rollin' hot ice and our aces are up

cash in the memories, pawn your baby blue gun  
and pack it all in the diamond-green dress:  
we'll burn red lanterns  
smoked to the filter  
jumpin' streetcars in a crush of bones  
on a hit & run valentine

*only the easy's left in hard rain...*

III.

*et tu, Bernard?*

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***a face in the crowd/***

the mob always rules against the greatness  
that has eluded them -  
the collective good is the effect of individual achievement  
as its cause.

mediocrity always levels off at the half-full expectation  
running on empty -  
ends justify means of suppression by those whose dim pursuits  
remain uncharted:  
hands of fate clench iron fists forged in defeat;

but the thumb wriggles free of fingers in exception to the rule  
leaving a firmer print - seeds in the weeds:  
the fruits of envy are the labor of genius  
pulling at roots.

the larger sum  
reduced to smaller parts - an adaptation to fiction  
breathes air into life,  
the intermission of a missing act's  
graceful intervention  
where all who kneel attend the same mass

*a gypsy's chance  
at the last dance cafe...*

draft of episodes  
end up as plot - fountainhead's  
regurgitated spout  
spits in the wind to water its grave

*the names of bones  
written in stone.*

the years are thinning  
and time has put on weight, who dressed up  
on 2 or 3 occasions  
then slipped into the comfort  
of solitude - an altar to my mystery  
in the silence of my confession.

I have no hatred left for my loving,  
nor spirit for the living - only star-crossed memories  
stir secret wishes to wake man's invention  
in a child asleep.

I failed to recognize myself in person  
as guest of my dreams

*brilliance are mirrors  
faced with promise.*

I am but a dark admirer of slivers of light  
in half-cracked doorways  
to catch a glimpse of my shadow  
in their reflection.

IIII.

*My body was found in a strange part of town.  
2:43 am. No witnesses.  
No suspects. No foul play detected –  
death ruled accidental.*

\* \* \* \* \*

***I was murdered last night/***

why remember?  
why care who or why?  
answers skip over questions  
of peaceful transition,  
stumble into *good night*  
cheat my final float –  
chatter-jawed traps  
snapping at the heels  
only mangle escape.

is it really the last thing  
I want to take with me?  
vengeance, justice,  
toward what resolution?  
every fingerprint  
to clue misfortune  
bloodied its hands,  
why sully mine?

the opposite's almost true:  
simply a lure whose grasp  
facilitated my release –  
gentle or not – unimportant  
when the ultimate solution  
is seduction in forget.

what *something* is better  
than *nothing*?  
why ruin my finest  
achievement?  
a forger's masterwork  
deceitfully incidental  
succeeds failure,  
sleep worthy of dreams:  
*big sleep's* pleasure  
outlasting *little death*.

and *what* of passion?  
liquid love's dried out bones,  
I walked away when the cup ran  
– silence cues my thoughts  
and the buzz is gone.

dead departure alive on arrival:  
daylight guiding shadows  
led angels to poison demons –  
this bird of thoughtful prey  
nestled in killer's hands  
freed the burden  
of my sweet dying.

in the last moments  
I had a choice,  
instruction always  
takes the last moral stand –  
the staircase behind me  
in which I retrace my steps,  
gravity to force my purpose;  
or kneel at the entrance  
to clear the cross

but my life was there for me  
and all it took were my words

*I reached for the door...*

†††.

*Epilogue – a hut.*

*there are no books on the shelves, dust shadows, empty cans like coffee cups  
and the memory of rain: thin as straw or sand, the drip of hollow songs;  
reflections without mirrors, stories with no endings, brooks that won't talk –  
a breeze in the woods, music after dark whisper through the leaves...*

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***accidental writer/***

I keep all my letters in a drawer –  
I take them out, o-n-e at a time  
shapes separate sounds  
form melody touching notes  
wrapped in alternate spaces  
without breaking character  
listen between silences  
lean into their voices

watch them speak to each other  
joined as chorus lines  
recite alphabet like hymns  
until the word is a poem,  
and when speech invites song  
they'll take me to the dance  
romance me with language  
maybe think themselves a novel,  
spell my name correctly;

or put them carefully  
inside my pillow –  
and when the dreams end  
I'll lay them out on sheets  
in the light of shadows  
and read love letters  
I write in my sleep