

Five Poems From The Fire Escape

Contents

2. *In Hiding*, and Times Before Our Nightmares
3. *Love, Like Guitars and Photographs*
4. *Sukkah*
5. *Doe a Delinquent*
6. *Games That Follow Murders*

In Hiding, and Times Before our Nightmares

Once we had to be so quiet we couldn't speak
we could not laugh
we could not breathe.
There was once a time of pianos and courtships
of grandfather clocks
and oh how they sang.
Once we had to live so small we couldn't eat
we could not sleep
we could not breathe.
Once the jingle of bells
and the sound of horseshoes
on cold cobblestone pathways
used to make us happy.
But then was the time
that our cries cried
our blood bled
our aches ached.
When our sleeps had dreams
our thoughts held memories
our notebooks scribbled with births
our calendars booked with festivity.
But then there was sleep steeped with death
minds awakened only by schizophrenia
and the only thing scheduled was
not to die

Love, Like Guitars and Photographs

Transfer your love
from the lens of your camera
to the divots of my complexion.

Forget our impending poem
we can't seem to Romeo and Juliet
if you can't make us into a sonnet

fine

but at least give me rhapsody over short lived revues

when by chance we make
love.

I'll always hope for your jealous eyes
on an air locked subway car
as the tan man with the guitar
ponders my thighs.

Sukkah

With your hands

Your hut

With your pride

You're divine

With your temper

Your temple

With your allowance

You almost allow mine

For your sister

Her two children

Someone loves you

Someone loves you

People love me too

Though it's not the same

they're far away

With your hands

You're happy

With your hands

You're holy

With your time

Your patient mind

Your other spirit

It's a pity

I'll only hear it

You have your guide

And I have mine

Doe a Delinquent

Everywhere are eyes I cannot shut
 eyes that hoard on our cell
 we the only female panopticon of shame
 caricature of what I'm not
 crimson blotch on the fabric of last night's
 trouble
 Red red heals
 matched my over-pouted lips
 becomes my symbol of disgrace
 men so desperate they should be castrated
 teasing us with patriarchy

The exotic concubines in the corner
 with strings hanging like tails
 from their cut-off shorts
 are unafraid –
 Releasing their breasts
 from the cuckold of corsets

No one is here to tame you
 the job's been done
 they're all here to blame you
 feisty Maria sits by my side
 scalp of oily brown locks
 it's been three days
 since they took her in
You've gotta talk to someone in here lil' sis
 her mouth so small tainted in pale
 she's been living on dry oranges, rice Krispies and
 milk
Otherwise you'll go crazy
 My eyes stare and water –
 not used to no one sticking up for the blue-eyed
 doe creature
 who couldn't have done anything wrong
c'mon tell me, what'd ya do?
 Child's words move from my tongue
 slowly in first-grade grammar
 seems kind of sick as I say *It was all just for some beer*
 She asked me if I ran
 I nod
 she says
Ah that's so cute

Games that Follow Murders

She's a little requiem
a little spitting image of a murder
peering at the maternal bruises
she knows daddy made

Wondering when all the blackness set in
and where the bridge came in
holding close her teddy
the reporter says she looks just like angel

Baby toes do grow
and children even if they don't say so
they know
pain a magnet to her soul

No one is like her
on the first day of school
no lunchbox in hand six year old
suppresses a cry like hers

Lucky she feels
that she won't have to worry about forgiving daddy
he's done the hard work for her
a scoundrel in flight, a vulture meets the icy cold

No one said you had to be alright
as you pant to keep the memory
panting through the cruel dreams
that haven't let you go

We were children in the driveway
watering the rocks and makeshift garden
you tortured a snake
your delicate hands matted with its guts

At school your mind is far
from multiplication and rhyming games
they can't distract you from the equation in your head
how all the love could equal that much blood

No one said you had to be okay
collecting images in your mind
of darkness and a night
that's yet to end

She's quiet when she has to tell the truth
she's mad at a faceless torture

un-punishable truth
knowing no loveliness awaits her in her youth

In a carousel of words
and recorded accounts
people with big lights
guilty but partial she feels to the screaming

Apart from this stage
there was no deed
and she's unsure why she has to be the one
hissing the horror from her clenched teeth

Your words feel like ghosts
on my shawled shoulder
laced of your chilly tales
a cloak I cannot remove

Yesterday, you showed me your pet mouse
said I didn't want to play
your evil hands clasping his belly
said I didn't want to play