

your leaving scars me still

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(after rob mcLennan's *the girl from abbotsford*)

two years one month four days
i waken, my hand on your pillow
still lonely for your warmth.

your cat curls at my feet
but is still not my cat does not
purr—ever — awaits your return.

i continue to lose weight.
food does not interest me
nothing does really—

i am holding your taste
like a verb on my tongue
afraid to swallow your tense.

i wonder how long it takes
for wounds to fully heal
and if scars ever fade.

perhaps they are all
that keep me here, remind
me of you, that i was loved.

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LIVING IN LIMBO

What you will notice
first, is the emptiness,
the infinite spaces—
where once there were
people, now there is
no-one. After very few
days, you will be
confined to your house
and at first, it will feel
like a sanctuary, you
will feel safe—it is,
after all, your home;
your sheltered,
protected, secure place
—you are not in any
danger here and you
feel comforted as if
when like a child,
all is well.

Outside, what you
can see from your
windows looks pure,
unsullied. You are
grateful it's still winter
and that snow comes
often and overlays all.
It could fool you into
thinking all was well.
But looking out those
same windows confirms
the same things your
TV tells you--everyone
is self-isolating, trying
not to get sick and not
to get anyone else sick
also, on the off-chance
you are a carrier of the
dreaded virus.

(con't...)

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Once, very late,
you see your
neighbour walking
his dog—
you are very fond
of this big beast
and you almost
open the door
to call to them
before you remember
the inadvisability
of this. This makes
you sadder than
anything about this
limbo in which you
find yourself.

(after Iain Lonié's The Entrance to Purgatory)

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A BLAZE INGLORIOUS

I don't care if I never see anything like it again.
Like a moth, I was compelled to the flames,
me and everyone else, just standing on the sidewalk
staring up at what we thought was an empty
building when there—at a window—a figure
in one of the windows, blackly silhouetted, then
poof — he was ablaze—at least I think it was a he—
it was hard to tell with the body swallowed in flames.

And you know how you see something awful
and you want to look away, but you just can't?
There's nothing for it; you stay bonded to the spot
even though every cell inside you is shrieking:
*Stop gawking—nothing good is going to happen,
leave now before it gets worse*, but you don't,
and I didn't. At first, it seemed as if the guy
was going to fall back into the building.
But he must've made a kind of herculean effort;
and abruptly, he crashed out of the window
and through the air like a flaming arrow.

I don't think he made a sound, maybe he
couldn't by then—that thought was unbearable.
A fireman said he was dead before he hit
the ground and they were hosing him down.
The air smelled sickly sweet as if there had
been a campfire, not a building burning, and
certainly not a person, no, not a person.
As if all of this weren't bad enough—and as
time goes on; I'm not even sure I saw this—but
as the flaming figure pitched out of the window,
for just a second, I think I caught a glimpse of a
tinier silhouette falling back into the building.

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WOLF, MY WOLF

(in memory of Farley, my wolf
2001 - 2015)

Oh, my wolf—
You howl down the moon.
You raise your lupine snout,
and your beauty slays the night.

Remember how you ran from us
afraid at first to trust
that we would love you, never leave?
Oh, my wolf—

We scoured the concrete jungle
and all the yards, near and far
every time you ran, just to hear
you howl down the moon.

Once we thought we'd lost you
for good—you were gone so long—.
Then driving through dusk saw you
raise your lupine snout.

Far out in a field, near a forest's edge
I was sure you would cut and run
But I called to you, and you came to me—
Your beauty slaying the night.

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LEAVING TO ARRIVE

She gasses the old mauve Buick at the last self-serve on the way out of town, smacks at droning but harmless bugs landing on the stalk of her smooth white neck and keeps shifting; stands with one dirty barefoot covering the other then switches.

She watches the numbers flip over on the gas pump, notes the ping announcing every gallon added, and jerks the nozzle out before it's finished. A faint dribble of fuel scents the air, as the excess runs down the side of the car.

Bill paid, she sashays back to the car, refreshes, *Sweetheart Pink* lips in her rearview, pops the clutch, puts it in first and peels into the night, the dust chasing her out to the two-lane the only evidence she was ever there.