

Laughter

The war broke me. He says casually.

This man—this soldier, recently returned home, who hasn't really returned,
dreams of washing away war's blood soaked sand from his hands,
indelible idolum of the wounded, dead, dying,
and a confusion born of not understanding all he feels.

“My past fucks me up too.”
I fearfully say, then quickly accede
“But my pain isn't like yours...
How could it be?”

We laugh, bitterly agree, chuckling at repugnant shrinks.
Their relentless insidious optimism,
reaffirmations to smile, telling us patience and hope,
loving and caring, and a little faith
will lessen the pain in time.

But we *know*,
it *never* will.

We both re-live the moments. Unending anger, pain, fear.
I say the only thing that might be true: “We're not alone.”
His hands shake—hiding the spasm, by beating a violent rhythm of heavy metal
out onto the steering wheel.
His mouth's corner curls, a half smile to hide behind, his eyes alive in anger—
and fear.

This fear is never tolerated. The anger can only be dangerous.

Guardedly he starts, “Everyone expects me to be who I was...”
It's a long minute before I finish for him: “...But you can't fake it anymore.”
His genuine smile understands. His eyes reflect deep lacerations, always new, in his soul.

The radio malfunctions.
The sound of static underscores emotions better left uninhabited,
suppressed thoughts, we cannot know are real anymore.
He beats a fist into the radio—plastic scatters,
skin rips open in a blood mist, then drips.

He barks a demented laugh—reminding me of the irony
that—to us—pain can be hilarious. I laugh my
agreement, and his cackle softens to genuine laughter.
His laughter infects me into laughing harder.
One's laughter fuels the others'.
Laughing,

Echoes and Inquisitions

laughing, until our faces hurt.
Laughing,
laughing, until our stomachs ache.
Laughing, laughing, until un hoped for tears fall.
Then the anger, fear, pain—every feeling we cannot explain,
somehow stops our laughing.

The silence strangles every and each sound bitterly,
as we arrive at our “normal” destination. A place we
both know, won't have a space
there will be no room
for our very specific
laughter.

A Minor Bird

A baby bird emerges from its shell,
and wonders "Where is my mother?
I am hungry, and no one will feed me."

The mother is off, for the hatchling
finding food.
But the hatchling doesn't understand.

He waits,
and waits for his mother,
while she is slow to return.

The hatchling sees a raccoon,
and wonders "Is this my mother? I'm hungry..."
The raccoon is here to eat the baby bird.

As the mother returns screaming,
the raccoon scampers away,
and the child asks "Are you my mother?"

She answers "Yes, my love." feeds the child, then says:
"You must learn to fly, and feed yourself.
But all in good time. Just know I love you."

The hatchling doesn't understand.
"But mother, I love you,
how do I learn to fly?"

"I love you," she responds
"When your wings have grown you will soar above all others
and you will know joy! For we, the birds, we fly!"

Little does the mother know, the baby bird was bitten—
his wing clipped,
and he can no longer fly.

The Whispering Echo of Your Gift

I felt the impact, the vicious, swift, deep cut
of razor sharp steel through skin,
not feeling the sting until the blood began pouring out.
It's the place where, within only I reside.
The cut was the unexpected fullness of your words
crafted neatly into a few lines of a poem. At long last I understood,
startled by the uncertainty affixed to your shy voice—the tap and click
of hard consonants—the melody of soft vowels.
Your shaking admission: you wrote the poem
simply, honestly, and lovingly, for me.

Years later, surprised by the yellowed page,
worn, frayed corners, and folds starting to tear,
the decades old casualty of repeated readings, refolding of pages,
hidden between the pages of a nearly forgotten book.
An accidental nudge slipped the page from its dusty hiding place,
reminding me to slide my fingers gently along the frayed edge,
unfolding the aged paper, once again invoking the love between words.

Slowly, I reread each word precisely chosen for me.
Echoes long forgotten, began once again. The passion began burning
anew in every empty space inside me.
Painfully delighted, deeply inside I felt the pulling begin,
needing again to be near you, with you.

It was time's cruelty, you see,
letting me believe my lips could caress every inch of you,
watching every rise and fall of your body's breathing.
My fingers tracing circles, smiling as pleasure chills raised the finest hairs
on your naked skin.

I was hopeful then, perhaps foolish, to believe I could give to you
the same depth and complexity of joy you selflessly infused inside me.
Believing I could restore and soothe your damaged heart.
To be who you wanted
to replace the empty creases in your sheets.

I still take long walks, mimicking what I adored most in you,
though I'd long ago forgotten the reasons why,
I childishly kick autumn leaves up to the wind, imprint my foot's shape
into the first freshly fallen snow,
so I could tell you, honestly.
I had.

My Secret Lover

I lean close, greeting her with a brush of my cheek to hers,
whispering, *Hello, lover.*
She smiles kindly, sensually, seductively,
while we settle lazily into deep comfort, facing each other.
She's always silent, drawing all details of my secrets
with simple expressions, locking my eyes within hers.
Amused yet nervously exposed,
I watch her anticipation
and approval from my eye's corner, while I pour her tea.

It's her favorite, an exotic Jasmine blend, sweetened delightfully by honey.
Her gratitude given in playfully crooked grins.
Her eyes slowly roll under closed lids with her first sip,
pressing lips slowly, rolling her head back,
humming her satisfaction.

We dismiss small talk. It's vile, the tedious wastefulness
of our revered time together, though she's never insulted if I turn taciturn,
she knows her every subtle expression releases a deeper, darker honesty.
Licking honey from lips, a knowing eyebrow raised, a crooked smile,
a slight turn to lift her chin, deliberately reflecting brilliant
light off each eyes iris lifting burdens, each carefully, in succession, to completion.
Her loving laugh miraculously evoking solace,
each laugh a potential inception to joy, each touch of fingers,
from her every breath
every time I unknowingly embarrass myself.

I tell her what she's missed: all my pain,
both physical and emotional.
Her seductive smile turns to one of sadness, and she knows
I understand, adore the true beauty in her smile,
the acknowledged pain of her eyes locked to mine, made even brighter
as tears begin to collect.

Sympathetically, she turns her head down,
eyes eagerly searching mine, as falling tears kiss, caress her skin.

Her next is a complicated look—still seductive, loving, and kind,
seeing a much darker pain than I will ever allow be shown.

I'm desperate to hear her musical voice,
despite our both knowing what she will say:
Come with me. You will never know pain again.
I will always love you, hold you. And never again, will you be alone.

Echoes and Inquisitions

It's the truth. She cannot lie. She can only be what she is.

Despairingly, I only reply:

I cannot my love. I want to be with you, but not while you are Suicide.