

BURNING STRANGER

You, stranger, smell of rotting bananas but you smile like my mother after she covers the dining room table in candles and closes the lights. You stagger-step slow, like my father when he walks up the drive in the early afternoon, after the night hospital shift, to his sun-lit room for sleep. Let's think of lighter things together. Your belongings—black tarp, dirty towel, bean tin can—flat and lone on the shock-white sidewalks like a track of black candle-wicks, awaiting your rotting flame. Between your shoulders an incendiary mold, planted in you by beasts a long time ago, spoils your young, teasing years with its fuming body. It lights the pink pit of your despair, the home inside your mind. It burns through your body like a dark crime. Your voice, rasped and tired, falls far from me like the alto choir boys at the Christmas concert who sang gospel from the dark balcony. Their white faces emerged from the blackness in spheres, reddened, as if they were reflections of the pews caught ablaze, glowing cherry and mortal in God's dark home. I think of the single candles we lit for their shadow, rainy voices. I think of this while seeing you.

I CANNOT SEE CLEARLY

I am thinking of Nina Simone, lilac wine and blackness.
Her voice is a dark road unfolding itself.
The sounds fall and we are tracing circles,
a voice like a hand on mine, coiling around
an icy beast brooding in my skull. Vines of lilac
blue surround its hazy body, shining like glass.
I listen so as not to think, to lose, to drink. When
the drum bass comes, heavy like her love, I cannot
help but feel unready for its ice lair. Her bass pounds
on, and we go together in loops around
this beast's arm, its leg. I blink and feel the violet goop
of its stomach acid flesh against my eyelashes.
Hypnotized by a strange delight, I feel this is what I want
to be, is what I am. But then, monsters are make-believe
unrealities. Mine reeks with brilliant hues and spikes
within my mind but if captured and removed
would be a shapeless, unsteady creature, suffocated
and dead without the sustenance of me.

AFTERMATH

I tore my tights on Tuesday and today the rain
slithers around a spot on my thigh exposed.

I cross my legs in the metal chair, the awning of a waffle
shop above, smell specks of gravel pasted to the chilled
wet skin. The drops slip underneath the translucent wrap,
streaming down my upper leg, down towards my bent bones,
hips like door hinges, gliding like a sharp sweet tongue
electrifying my body through a spot on my thigh exposed.

I am not in Bryant Park anymore, but on top of a mountain,
a river below is swelling up to me. Each drop that slips into
the spot floods my need for more, but a wrong move, a noise
like a sigh leaves my throat. The sweet tongue falls, the rain
furiously bathes me in salt and I quickly forget its sweetness.
Guilt spoke sharply, I hear strange sounds now in the rain.

To my ears, it shrieks, roars and weeps.

UNTAINTED

Today I flipped through a picture book of tigers
and read about their long canine teeth, which kill victims
with a deadly bite to the back of the neck.

I too would like to know the rip of my inches long teeth
into felt lined skin. For the hard flesh of prey to surround my mouth,
the sour and pungent blood to pour out from an electrified body
like a faucet, filling the slits between my teeth.

Then the wasteland of my eyes, brightly flashing like torches
into the stuck and stunned eyes of my victim staring at the end
of its life unfalteringly. Then the round of a narrow collar bone,
packed deep within the flesh, which my tongue will press against.
The target's legs would fold like the bonework of a house of cards,
and collapsed it's life would leave in jerks and fast breaths
and spasms, its blood sinking quietly into the wet dirt.

Then myself, ears hollow like wind through the trees,
lungs moving fast and cold like engines in the winter,
stripes dark with blood and fodder, fresh and untainted.

LOOSE SCREWS

Beyond the window of a small green trailer,
brown leather walls, loose screws, blue bolts
of thick lightning falls from the Colorado sky.
Cerulean edges, white centers, shit hot, drops down
on the turkey coop. A cloud of flies buzz over the broken
kitchen sink, the turkeys scream. I am here again.
Where are you? You didn't see it the way I did.
A yellow haze swirled like boiling milk, dark clouds
rolled up in the sky, a sick spread in my gut.
Two sips of beer signaled a siren to shoot between my ears.
Two hands on my hips cut me like blades and the blood lingers
here, leaking. Purple fury poured from the sky,
blind with power, and I lay still, frozen and wet beneath it.
You and I lived in a kinder world, you spoke to me sweetly, but love,
sometimes I am called to that trailer and obediently I come back
to where the flies gather and stick their tongues into the sweet,
the lightning holds like a cage, and I am burned blind to what you held
in your hands outstretched to me, dark streams of your raven hair,
loose and unraveled.