

On Margaret Filled with Smoke

Don't you know? Hero grows in broken home,
Swollen cheeks and eyes are fine, just hide and
count minutes on her wrist, give mom a kiss.
Margaret did. Light and violence birthed a kid,
name him child, name him boy, name him girl.
name him anything. Better – name it nothing.

Airplane bottles, tiny cocktails, make a mobile,
set in motion metronomes overhead,
both before and after bed, tucking in,
set the thermostat to cold. Shiver you!
shiver boy! Uncertainty is velvet,
it is sure to keep you warm. Winter's warm,
when winter comes at all, spring and fall and
No. You are not a child of the sun.
when darkness came, when darkness comes,
do greet him warmly (with uncertainty)
welcome him across the threshold that keeps
out the dirty forest. Frost covered earth.

the open doorway, you could just make out
quick flash of right eye cataract, follow
boy, he's grown up now, he has buried things,
has killed things too. Stands waiting in the room,
Margaret rocks her rocking chair, air compressed,
Her perfume dense. She waves you in. Accepts
your pendulum of nothing, of nothing,
you of nothing, of nothing, of nothing,
Of light and violence. Of shallow silence,
Shallow, yet still deep enough to drown in,
I have seen men drowned in puddles. So do
call home. Scream through the screen of swinging doors,
but your voice carries the same frequency,
swallowed by lights. Ceiling's circular bulbs,
of lamps in the street, of sky on the lake,
of cloud covered moon. You'll talk again soon.

You'll talk of light and violence. Of shadows
Come to haunt you, come to kiss you, kill you,
They come disguised as infant poltergeist,
And promise already to grow old.
And you've grown old.
You're still as stone and sad,
A sorrow common in things without hearts,
A patience reserved for lawless winter.
We were minerals. We knew nothing of
Breath. But we breathed nonetheless, our denim
Matchbox pockets filled, our heavy guilt, our
Gasoline. Sing something sweet, idiot wind,
We watched your words curl up like smoke. They rose
They fell, They froze in cold November air,
Some arsonists, some anywhere. We watched
Your words curl up like smoke. They rose, they fell,
Like passing phantoms in the night. Tidal,
Fleeting, running, repeating, 'its alright
Its alright, its alright.' Those seeds are sown.
And don't you know? You breathed, you didn't, no.

stand we there

stand we there
smoke sting eyes
whirlwind dream
alibies
rocket star
broke moon dark
distant drum
clicking heart
you – me – here?
why not now?
pulling hair
sky fall down
violent grass
red stripe skin
wind collapse
stop begin

siren call
wake you now
tremble neck
hear no sound
pinkwhite eyes
why so still?
margaret breathe!
margaret killed?
margaret speak!
night commands!
pulse on wrist?
warm on hands?
violent grass
cover sin
spade move earth
stop begin

To a Bride Growing Thin

The clock in the kitchen, it didn't count seconds
His idiot tongue knew no words,
The hour hand moved on the hour, we reckoned,
And screamed with a clay cuckoo bird
Minutes said summer and doors grew in frames
Agoraphobe Natalie, going insane

The clock in the kitchen it slept all through June,
The cuckoo bird missed all the sun,
The hours had promised to wake Nati soon,
But the comatose minutes unspun,
The calendar laughed but did not eat a thing
And July was as thin as she ever had been.

A red-stitched white ball flew back through the window
The shards of glass mended themselves
The kids ran away and Jack called them pussies,
And screamed them to all go to hell,
The cuckoo's green tears fell and pooled on the ground,
And awoke in September, red, yellow and brown.

The hour hand looked at the closed and cracked window,
And saw himself for the first time,
The clock in the kitchen, it froze in December,
The Seconds they shivered and died,
The calendar's name, nobody remembered,
Natalie asked, but winter unanswered,
And both just a twelfth of their size.
The cuckoo bird called to come out every hour,
But the minute hand hung, fifty-five.

The clock in the kitchen, it melts in the spring,
And the wall it looks empty and white,
The hour hand's broken, pneumatic, asleep,
In a puddle of sad, phantom time,
The Calendars wasted away to a bone,
She hasn't died yet, but already a ghost,
Grey cardboard square with a mannequin's soul.

And the west facing windows, they never see sun,
They dreamt of pink settings that never did come.

Margaret, again

When you asked about a soul,
I laughed, 'You mean the brain,
And the way the veins can take the shape,
Of something shapeless in your head
And be invincibly invisible but not at all concrete.
But when mother grew her headstone,
We watched the moving clouds,
Kept our heads out of the ground,
Left my thoughts unspoken,
Hidden,
Like the tattooed wall behind the school,
Where you asked me about love,
I laughed, 'The heart just forces blood,
To heads and hands and places
It might not really want to go,
those girls off chasing bottles,
golden Johnny Walker Red,
To be whisked by boys to bed,
The same way they once knew,
Cranes dropped children on front porches,
Like the one that held your yellow house,
An empty picture frame,
We'd disregard the inside scenes,
Your mother's swollen wrists and eyes were fine,
As long as that old wooden chair,
Kept swinging we'd keep sitting,
And you'd keep asking about fate,
Like it was something that existed
Outside the pages of some book,
(star-crossed lovers who died at the same time,
You said that there was love in poison,
That there was love in suicide)
Then when Margaret left we asked,
Why not a single celebration,
Bright flowers and congratulations.
So we burned up all your Shakespeare,
And that fire forged a ring you let me slip around your finger,
we dressed your youth in white and put a veil over its eyes,
Fattened like a slaughter cow, at some fancy ball reception,
To cut its throat while you were sleeping.

When you woke you were a piece of art,
And asked if you were beautiful,
I laughed, 'you're just a storybook,
With wrinkles, scars and beauty marks'
And some curled up like smoke above
That goddamn yellow house,
And some ran off in straight fast lines,
Like the way we ran away,
Our denim matchbox pockets filled,
With heavy guilt and gasoline,
And there was happiness like Velcro,
That stuck my face to yours,
And when we died as one, a piece of art,
I knew of poison,
And the cancer of a wedding,
And the hot knives in the cake,
The cyanide in white champagne.

Ha!

Ha! You screamed Ha!
And the night echoed laughter,
An ecstasy passed her and left smoke behind
No! She cried No!
And you heard go faster,
(and heard again after, no longer confined)
Why? She asked why?
And you said you wanted,
Thin blood was faulted, whiskey and wine
Love? She asked love?
And you laughed what is it
Starcrosses, kisses, strangling vines
That! She said that!
And you said you couldn't
(or only when wooden), you hadn't the time
Fine, she said fine
I'll carve something pretty,
Fill him with pity, some manner of kind
Where? She asked where?
Lost and can't find him,
Could swear was behind him, these legs just too slow
Old, fucking old,
Now nothing grows in me,
Was some sort of pretty, that fairy-tale time
Please! She begs please!
To look like I did once,
Who grants such wishes, and in what degrees?
Stone! Like a stone!
Such staying complexion,
And carved into sections, no pain in the knees
Oh, nevermind,
Smooth skin or wrinkles,
Sad songs or jingles, these ears won't decide
Oh, nevermind,
Wrinkles or smooth skin,
Wings on the rooftin; angel, wretch, djinn
Old, I've grown old,
And did you grow with me,
Or wriggle your wrists free and fight off the tide?
Die, when we die,
Oh hell – what's the difference?
It's faster than friction, lasts longer than life.
Die, when I die,
You can come along with me,
And welcome to kiss me (but must close both eyes)