

Message Across the Sea

I flash a private semaphore in braille
across the sea's
barren cityscape to you,
night's sailoress,
receiving this S.O.S.
in your star-lit Spanish courtyard,
knowing my messages may
make blockbusters, Oscar-winners
or flail along
your fragile bricolage, cast
with thriftstore cordwood
upon a biohazardous hill few
dare to climb or
gamble hypothermia venturing up,
but your body in the night—skein of peach-bark
at its floral peak—
is a global center of commerce towering
over all others,
over redwoods and skylines, pulling
jetliners from their configurations.

With your words, you lend the gulf between us
fresh currency, so that
we might meet by a glittering bayou,
on a pier extending
far into the malarial horizon, or else
mast-to-mast
on some electric estuary:
paper sailboats crowning
the Maker's turquoise,
seasick thumb.

New Years' Eve

The tipplers fold up their bloodied wings
and wet them at Bahamas beaches,
bright and white as Christian relics.
The fall and all it promised's lost.
I have finally gained immunity to sex,
news reports of murder, and frost.

The knife on my desk spells S.O.S.,
hungry for a raft of skin like butter.
On TV the Aryan-faced news anchor reports
the number of niggers lovingly lynched
by "Missouri's finest" last year. An hourglass
poured and re-poured for every hanging.

The window's quiet. I lay with my head
propped up on pillows, stuffed to spate
with images of crucifixions and dread
for the coming year. I take my medicine:
the gunshots by yelling strangers
in the streets paved gray with bullet-lead.

A beast of privilege in my simmering lair.
Having forgone the pleasure of walking,
whisked it away for a motorized bubble
that carts me around town, "good as any,"
and keeps the hustle and bustle at bay,
now why would I want more? But more,

like "carnivore," seems written in the air,
seems written in these very feet, on the screen,
in the fireworks blossoming over Times Square,
in the firecrackers like hand-grenades tossed
recklessly into the street. The wish for more.
For more than what is granted one at birth.

For money, love, and material satisfaction,
when the minerals required are almost parched.
But I have no need of them, they are ruses.
I have learned instead the love of hunger.
Bunched confessions cackle from an open drawer.
The New Year passes discretely, like so much film.

Cry of the Newly Wed

If this is now, my dear, then what was then?
Holstered at the window, hands flummoxed by sun,

you pluck and strum our crème de corps, our lovebird
singles, composed by summer hand-locks, by feverish

nights spent close, squinting out of our quaint 50s castle
upon an unmoving asphalt moat, which neither car

nor possums care much to trespass. (An empty road.)
You sing, *When I first locked eyes... I knew you were the one.*

But those words and chords stand untrue compared to these:
the turquoise burst and blare of another Netflix sitcom,

incoming breezes from the interstate, or our schnau-
zer's frigid bark at ghosts. This is the kingdom

of skulls. *Your hand in mine... as though we're*
levitating... And after a day's work each, we collapse,

exhausted in our cranial thrones, caressed separately by our
Laz-E Boys' leather kisses, our Macbooks' electric

tributaries to illumination. But when my back's turned
from the window, sometimes, I think I hear the highway

whispering, whispering to me alone. And I feel myself dissolve
into one of its many uprooted travelers, uncertain of who

or what I am. Even more uncertain of who you are
behind your beard, behind the craft beer bottles you toss

casually into the bin. Both of us so royally far apart I'm sure
that we're no longer flying together, but lying down.

Rilke's Spanish Dancer Revived, One Lonely Night in Seville

Emerging from the darkness,
she carries her own light, brightened
by an acoustic's strings, plucked as if a wind
had brought the Moors back to Sevilla,
if only for a night. Her black-clad feet,
little pamphlets of desire and distress,
spell out "peligro" on the floor.
They chatter like frigid ghosts, long-
departed from these times, these shores,
sailed for Western coasts where,
there, too, the flame of liberty has died.
And yet it breathes again tonight,
for those brave enough to fill their hand
with fire, and cease from flinching.
Amid the vacant stares, the applause, the time
allotted tourists for their camera shots,
she kicks. She ignites the flame once more.
One feels she's kicking away the dust
that's settled over our eyes with age;
and with those kicks, those flashes of leg
beneath her ruffled kingdom, she rises as sun-
goddess, punting cameras from the cliffs
with thunderous taps and a devastating grin.

Summer of Rain

I walk through a valley of twigs,
toddler's arms cleaved from their wooden
scapulae, the cartilage laid bare as hosts
on sidewalk-altars and crew-cut lawns. The grave pair
from *American Gothic*, pitchforked, pluck
the damage up, and haul the corpses
into their backyard's morgue and crematory.
I think I see the head of a friend or two
rearing up, impaled on their fenceposts' carnassials.

It's been this way half the summer now.
Along a busy road, I bury myself in beehives
of traffic, a chronicler of carhorns,
headlights, and slammed doors, their angry rush
seeming less and less a measure in grace
and more and more a measure in futility.
Head full with their shrieks, with the glares,
barks, and leopard-mouths and -screeches of those
I pass by, I have come to empathize with the clouds.