

Five Poems for Sixfold

Everest

Icefalls flow formed
in the weather of her own invention
This downward stream of tears

rips a hidden dominion of

chasms beneath
the Mecca we faithfully revisit
upon surviving each prior pilgrimage
and restless penance at base camp

Snow-blind devotion erases any trace of self
upon the cruel white slate of existence
Cold-pierced flesh violated senseless
invites each bite of substantiation

In our beguiled reply
to her fierce frail too-silent entreaty
we clamber over vast vertical sheets of icy

inaccessibility They rise at once toward a familiar
crest upon the barren horizon
We recognize it it heralds the bloody miracle of birth

the silky red dawn a derelict in its first breath
this child mourns its black womb's death
We shall be sacred guests at this holy wake

Tiny are the pitons and ropes we follow
toward willful deprivation and gradual
brutal injury they are yet emblems of hope

Unmovable meticulous
the sun-frozen summit
feigns perfect blinking oblivion

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Chartreuse

Chartreuse is...

Sour-apple-flavored candy;
The regrettable team color of your alma mater's rival;
Also, a jacket that, unfortunately, can never be misplaced...

It is the labial-nasal fricative of choice
For cicadas and fire-flies on a summer's night;
It rings with satisfaction,
Like the vaguely perturbing chortle of someone's
Quintessentially hip grandma,
Who has just reclaimed her youth through Yoga
(Why that should bother you at all is the subject for another poem);
Or like the Czechoslovakian tinkle of the glass bell
You long ago purchased in Prague for a song...

On the tongue
It fizzes like an herbal cold remedy,
Or tangs like key-lime pie (the roadside diner's specialty);
Also, it both fizzes *and* tangs like a Midori Sour on the rocks –

And much like the fuzzy socks –
That you, of course, wouldn't be caught dead in –
Or that uncool vinyl retro stool in your mother's kitchen,
And even the satiny ribbon you got for "honorable mention"
(No one ever has to know it was actually for fifth-place,
Which also happened to be dead-last),
Chartreuse feels quaint and comfortable;

Much like a friendly option on the dessert menu
For the lactose intolerant on a date, and the certain, new
Implications disseminated by such a serendipitous discovery,
Chartreuse heartens and inspires...
Chartreuse reassures.

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Travel by Starlight

Though the map has led me to a future
That reason could never have presumed,
And I have embraced this trail's unfolding
Story, like an old forest embraces
The most tender, quivering, new creatures
Engendered in its fertile underbrush,
Gathering chaste courage to reach above,

In the starlight of dreams I would gladly
Resume that serene drive past misted fields
Of wildflowers bending their heads dimly
Toward immature roots as they settle
Into the sun-warmed peat beneath, their hues
Muted by the dusk tumbling softly
From the sky like a swarm of butterflies.

As I recall keeping pace with vast hay
Bales rolling themselves into great carpets,
Lining themselves up along the roadside
Just so, my heart flutters with nostalgia
For the summer thunderstorms, the midnight
Whispers between crickets and cicadas
And ancient oaks' songs that once defined me.

I've turned the map on its head, made east west
And west east, while searching out and *finding*
The Northern Lights flickering above me;
However majestic and surreal these
Wraiths' dances may remain, their hold on me
Is fleeting. My dreamy reverie is
No more solemn – nor gratuitous – than

The gas fireplace crackle that has roused me.

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Insecurity

I dress in jewels, set in platinum,
So that you will find my beauty unmatched,
My charm irresistible, and you will
At once accept my noble origins –
In truth, I am the bastard child of Pride,
Who for obvious cause could not abide
Illegitimacy, and so left me,
An orphan, to be reared by Vanity.

Having shown an early predilection
For the obscure, my proficiency in
The skills of discretion and subtlety
Flourished and promised me an apt future.
My resolve to please is its own reward:
I await your slightest inclination
To slip me secretly onto your wrist,
And I delight in warmth imagined there.

Though I sojourn alone in the darkest,
Most suspect and elusive of boudoirs,
You may invoke me with but a moment's
Notice and make use of me shamelessly;
For your mere curiosity purchased
My signed and sealed quality assurance
That no measure of abuse or insult
Could vandalize my careful carapace.

Yet, deep and hidden, beneath the gilding,
A solemn ember's touch branded my soul:
He called himself Desire, and claimed to be
My distant cousin, when, once, appearing
Unannounced, cloaked in the depths of a dream.
His tender whispers still smolder there; though
He eludes my sight, his breath fills the voids
Of my being with a brutal yearning

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To burst with hopeful tongues of flame that lash
At the sweet, metal tang of the surface.
Both fortifying and consuming my
Existence, He subsists on the groundless
Possibility that your quite sudden,
Unwarranted disinterest in me
Might *at last* be so astonishing, so
Unanticipated, forthright and plain,

As to be commensurate with the fixed
Bitterness that keeps me buried with Him.

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Dolphin Bodies

A tenuous line flickers, silver and
Unsteady, between the semantic realms
Of humorous wit and horrifying
Hollowness. I sometimes try tiptoeing
That line, careful, mindful of being watched,
As my sandals skim the foamy waves.

But not so unlike Jesus' calm triumph
Over physics, my quiet feat of wrestling
Words loose from language – their wriggly forms set
Cascading forth past throngs of glassy eyes --
Soon trickles into anonymity.

Slippery and pearlescent, freed from their
Nets of fabrications and assumptions,
These effusive, sparkling syllables
Shine like seashells in a breezy, sun-lit
Mist; their dolphin bodies slide peacefully
Beneath the surface, uncomprehended.

Swimming beyond the ancient influence
Of the Proto-Indo-European
Umbrella's tyranny over human vision,
At what cost have the words, indeed, escaped?
We float in a bottle of repression,

Embracing phantoms within the same glance
In which we disparage passion and substance.
When confused, we nod with self-assurance;
When certain, we guard ourselves with caution.
Ever buoyant, we yet shun true laughter
To save ourselves from incredulous tears.