

Collision

You were always there, it seemed, at the edges
gripping the hems of my weekend scenes.

I, the allegiant regular
The bartenders knew my bottles
Allowed tabs. I did not bluster, or get muddy
I left upright, with dignity and dollars in my pocket.

You flitted, sulked, and roamed all over the place
your orbit slushy, sequenced to a design
only you could follow.

Some nights, you plinked an entire roll of quarters into the jukebox
sifted out some lovelies from the stacks:
Donny Hathaway if you ached.
Coltrane for storms, sorting the debris in your head.
Zeppelin or Jack White, if you wanted to brawl.
You screamed for someone to turn it up.
Swagger with a pool cue guitar.

I caught you howling in the bathroom once
Pretended I hadn't, and retreated.
You came out wearing lipstick the shade of an open vein
and left with your arms around a dizzy girl,
her neck spattered crimson.
You probably weren't merciful that night.

You were discussed.

She spreads trouble.

Rowdy.

I outgrew turbulence long ago.
Tossed it furious and berserk and spitting,
a mad thing with plague in its blood
shirked a bursting city too gutter sharp for me
and staggered West, to unravel in peace
with the rest of the quiet folk.

So I tried to ignore you.

But you just bustled in tonight,
all yawning havoc and catastrophe
and skid a glass next to mine
your ante for uprooting my waveless world.

Spark

July 7th, and the fireworks loiter –
Elemental fizzles to my north,
cracking the night open
like a lover with rude hands.
Take that. Feel that.
A wallop of copper, zinc, aluminum, iron.
Most times, the chemistry gets folded up
discarded under the shiver and boom.
Forgetting, or not caring:

We quarter the same fuels, tourists in our blood.

We're burning up there, too.

Affliction

At the next table, intruding
A clump of youth. Crooked, dropped-razor hair, unfinished faces
Kick started, roaring, and sermonizing,
Slinging wide ideas over waffles and eggs.

You drag out the usual colossal savages to debate:
Death. War. Love.
But remotely, just nibbling the corners.
Mouths spilling notions deprived of knowing
anything so stout, or final, as those beasts.

Ozone and poses in your words.
Sentences lagging on barren turf
The nothing left when experience withers,
and all your crowing gives out.

Something mean uncoils in me at your noise.
I want to say:

You are as significant as ortolans,
glutted with the foggy bloom of half-grown doctrines.
Your end will be just as horrible,
but you won't gnash or scrabble
when the brandy barrel locks shut.
Taken by surprise.
Compromised.

*(Your ramparts were so radiant, so tough, how did they fail?
Cobbled of followers, feeds, personas -
garbage slathered in every crevice, to keep out the rain and ruin.)*

Spines duped into believing
a hashtag hits harder than what's waiting for you outside
in the years rattling ahead.

I've met the slashing gods.

I've learned to salute lesser ones.
Those who really understand how to sink into the gray spots:
Comfort. Quiet. Rest.
The burn cures of aging.

I want to say these things.

Give warning before you tumble out of this place
Be the sapped, seen-it-all diviner
who lurches in, rips up your rails
alters the story before it's too late.

Instead, I let you carry on
(Struck feeble and flightless.)

Pay my check.
Leave you to prod giants,
already hearing your bones crunch between their teeth.