

I Walk Backwards Towards Calypso (Loose Villanelle)

Trapped inside this box again:
damp, cold, dark, and dim;
my reflection is muddled by the rain.

I peer out dirty window panes,
with mouth sewed shut, I cannot scream.
I'm trapped inside this box again.

Embellished by this twisted mark of Cain,
I was branded, brother, I lost my name.
My reflection is muddled by this reign.

No escape from marching pain,
Gun gripped tight, I dropped my dream.
I'm trapped inside this box again.

Ensnared within the grey zellenblock zehn,
I begged for salvation from my seraphim.
My reflection muddled in the rain.

One quick shot, I went insane,
and I did fall to the regime.
Trapped inside this box again
my reflection is muddled by the rain.

Pesticide

You're a filthy habit
carried around in the trench-
coat pocket of my mind
like a lucky pack of cigarettes.
Each exhale of your name,
kicks like hammer
against my church bell lungs.

I proclaimed the last time I would savor
the taste of your name would be erasing
and eulogizing the carving I etched upon my desk.
Each pen stroke cast bullets through your memory,
bleeding ink over the old wood's fresh tattoo.

But like every smoker's first
last cigarette, that wasn't enough.
My fingertips still rattled
like angry wind chimes in the breeze.
So I dug your name into the beckoning
caverns of my skin—
each letter an excavation site
to unearth where you rooted
all the stubborn, ugly dandelions

with your hideous smile
inside of me.

I'm taken to the ER in dirty bandages.

My lover asks how I'm feeling.

Silently, I start picking off
each fresh scabbed letter.

They leave me when my skin
starts gushing your name again.

After my x-rays show I'm more
ash than bone, the doctors
cast my arm in cement
to prevent me from playing
he loves me, he loves me not
with my stitches.

Cancer, but I already knew that.

The trouble though, is there's no chemo for love.

Sobriety

Tires boiling in the sun,
The stench of garbage, pirouetting
From your maggot-buzzing innards
Trace the iron column of my back
'Till it tickles my hairline;
Lingering like a swirling specter
Whispering that I waste my time
Chasing butterflies and that I misspell
'Intimacy' as 'hors d'oeuvres'
At every intersection our lips crash.

You painted your face a porcelain doll
to match the porcelain highway
you use to *smell the roses*,
a tongue-in-cheek code for crushed
Xanax and hollow reassurances
that this is all under control.
Give it a month, maybe two,
I've been here before.

So it went, three months
I went without a relapse.
'Till a rapping racked my door,
and you still had that crooked smile
painted on as if the weather had no effect

on your cover-up.

Trick or treat, you said shaking

a pill bottle maraca

like a toll to cross my welcome mat.

Before I knew it, my chips for being sober

were on the ground faster than your clothes.

Cockroach

Beast no bigger than a wishing stone
inquisitively inches closer.

I must be the only organism
encountered since nuclear fallout.

To this eager, desolate creature
God's company towers beside it
casting a shadow of salvation.

Where does my God lie? I catechized,
How have I not stumbled upon Him?

Reciting the novel my boot heel
engraved deep into this weathered world,
I tell of toppled elms and treks through
molten sewers to dig up corpses
for feasting on spoiled human flesh.

I contend, *What is it that you've done?*

Crucifying the critter upon
ripe spire, guts splatter against my cheeks.

Rueful, scuttering ember. I writhe
while I roast squirming insect over
deliverance's flame. It continues
thrashing. Boldly clinging onto life.