

Chaos Theory

At different points in my life
I have either feared the butterfly effect
or taken solace in it.
There's something ominously fatalistic
about blindly resolute belief
that striking a match can cause
a devastating forest fire,
or the act of merely skipping pebbles
might produce thrashing waves down stream.
At the same time I am comforted by the thought
that small vibrations might create entire cosmos,
or that a missed commuter train might lead
to meeting the love of your life.

The truth is though,
that for all this time
I've had it wrong.
The butterfly doesn't know
whether it's wings produce
a storm around the world
or nothing at all.
It doesn't attempt to pick and choose
whether it's movement leads
to destruction or tranquility.
it just continues flapping.

Prey

The next time the hyenas come,
I let them sink their teeth in,
for I am just a carcass,
an empty vessel
disguised in a gazelle suit.

How foolish of them
to poison me with their liquor,
as if a caught gazelle has a choice
between fending off a pack
or succumbing to her fate.

I hope they felt moronic
when they stripped me down
only to find the inedibles left—
hair and hooves and a vacant soul.
As they choked on shards of my bones,
I cackled,
you can't kill what's already dead.

Paisley is Born

I am a siren,
a figment of folklore,
part woman of fantasy,
part creature of the sea.
My melody wafts like midnight smoke
surrounding sailors
to smother them to their deaths.

I am a woodnymph,
delicate and dainty.
The fluttering of my wings
made to spin sugar in your ears,
filling heads with cotton candy wishes
so sickeningly sweet,
yet nowhere to be found
once the sugar high crashes.

I am a serpent,
slender, slinky, and slippery.
I slither my way through your legs,
my gold and copper colored scales
pressed against your naked flesh.
I'll coyly coil around your neck,
so when you scream,
it's stifled by my squeeze.

Scared Straight

In twelve step meetings
the old heads all sing unison
drugs only bring you to jails, institutions, and death.
I guess the rehab staff wanted to show us
what the 'jails' part looked like
since we were already in an institution,
and though unspoken,
they knew we'd all seen death by that point
in some form or another.

I couldn't tell you the name
of the man that sat down before me.
I can tell you that his wavy, down-textured hair
fell around his face like a halo,
so when I looked in his eyes,
he seemed more angel
than psychopath killer.

He had just a few months left of his bid,
so I asked him
What's the first thing you'll do when you get out?
My adolescent mind
reeled with all of the possibilities.
I pictured him running towards an embrace
with his wife and his children,
or maybe throwing a party that
the whole neighborhood would join.
I salivated for him at the thought
of how sweet freedom must taste
after a decade stuck inside a cage.

The man didn't miss a beat when he said
*I'm gonna to take my shoes off
and feel the blades of grass beneath my feet.*
I must have looked at him with confusion
because he said to me
you don't get to take your boots off in prison.

And suddenly it all clicked,
and then I knew he was a saint
because in that moment I was born anew.
This man with every right

to resent the unending loss
that comes with incarceration,
to feed me cookie cutter answers
that I expected to hear
because who was I really?
Just a punk teenage kid
he was forced to sit across.

Instead, he gave me a gift
more valuable than recovery itself.
See, whenever I'm feeling trapped,
when I'm in my internal prison,
and it feels like I've tried every combo
for this lock that keeps me
cycling through a self-loathing loop,
I think of the mantra he gave me:
Find your grass.

Momentarily I'm transported back
and I'm eating pizza with a state prison inmate
where when I woke that morning,
life felt so tumultuous and banal
and by afternoon,
I had been resurrected.
When I return to my current state,
I am filled with gratitude so deep,
that I am moved to tears of joy.

Energetic Affinities

My favorite part of the morning
is tracing your silhouette by light
streaming through curtain cracks at dawn,
running my fingernails over the curves
of your arching back,
the way you writhe as I reach your hips,
your neck falling back in synchronicity,
it's tiny hairs raised to meet my lips
as if to wish me good morning,
in our own secret language.

Even when I wake alone I think of how
your warmth envelops me,
swallows me whole like grassy fields
on sun-soaked summer days,
how it fills me with white light,
my celestial spirit becomes
a supernova bursting,
coating everything around me in golden glitter.

In that moment, I wonder
whether your bed quakes from the blow?
Perhaps you too are now
bathed in my stardust.