

Hollow-eyed And High

L'appel du vide

cigarette
on the western wall;
stubborn toes
in worn out shoes;
cold front like
a rising tide;

Someone's car alarm's gone off
in the middle of night!

Cursing erupts from the dark garage
where Dad left your motorcycle
to crumble
to ashes and dust.

A great tornado spirals up
your James Dean feet, the engine
singing.

You smoke the cigarette and finish
right to the filter. One last one,
fading.

Eyes peer out from the shadows
around the corners
where dust begins to settle.

You rev the engine and watch
the wind turn the chimes.

A distant dog howls, barks, and
softly melts into
a train horn.

The night sky bleeds in
where the sun has set, hiding
old and fresh bruises.

Our uncle told you once that
"Firestones burn hot
like coals" ;

you asked:
"how can something burn so hot
and not melt the road?"

When dawn came over the lawn,
I knew you were gone
for good this time.

Maybe I'll hop on my own bike
and get a pack of menthol lites
(your brand) and lean against
the western wall too, sighing

and smoking and pretending that
my future is any different.

Maybe it is.
Maybe it isn't.

Maybe I should prepare
for doomsday anyway,
hop on my own bike, and
just go.

Maybe it's the life of the world to come,
coming for us at last with it's firm grasp
on the days long past.

Father John told me once
that I let the dark get to me
more than it ever should.

I asked him if he's ever read Revelation,
a bible chapter written by a young prophet
high on fly shit, who saw
the cathartic future to come.

I keep expecting a mighty revelation of my own to come.
I keep expecting your return.
I keep on waiting and watching,
sighing and smoking and hoping,
keeping a close eye on
the tire-tracks you left behind.

Where You Went

First: the gas station to get cigarettes.

Then: revving my engine up in front of
cute girls; flirting for an hour; smoking; then,
coughing (new brand); swallowing the vomit;

driving through cavernous nights alone,
these Firestones burning, bubbling the roads
I leave behind; (Just like Uncle promised)
counting out change for a cheap motel room;

and driving until I break down somewhere.

So: I sell my bike and go hitch-hiking
down the road like Chris McCandless or Guthrie,
like Kerouac or Snyder,
like all these

countless people I see on the highway,
thriving. I was born to be a lost ghost,
wandering. I was born to be some gross
tossed trash. Or, maybe, I'm caraway seed

ready to dig down and rush my roots in,
when I feel ready to do so again.

A History

Socrates drank hemlock on his own terms;
Sylvia shoved her head in the oven;
Woolf wept as she drowned in the Ouse's bed;
D'J died just like Hemingway before him.

slept in again
buried diary entries
"kill the messenger"

Judas had hung himself on a tree branch;
Caesar never saw it coming mid-March;
St Becket expected it as he prayed;
Wallace left his manuscripts, unfinished.

reading old books and
crocheting dream-quilts, arching
my back like a cat

Icarus fell just like young Phaethon;
Saul fell on his sword to spite coming doom;
Finny's own marrow broke apart his heart;
Terry Schiavo smiled at her plug pulled.

open up the window
cigarette and watch traffic
call out some dead names

I feel the want every day I wake up.
I feel the regret with every friend lost.

Maybe somewhere out there, you are alive
and, if you are brother, then I am too.

So, I call your name out into the wind,
dangling my feet out of my window still.

say how it's not fair
flick my butt out the window
lay in bed again

Everything has a death, right?

Father, Father

“Forgive me, Father. It's been a few
years since my last confession. And

“sitting here by the curtain, where
do I begin?” From the beginning:

I've been told that confession
makes the soul better. Your priests,
they ask, and
they challenge me daily:

*My son, my son.
What have ye done?*

I walk to basement shows
late at night. I slip past
dark corners, go under

overpasses, where punks
hang. Swinging, they ask me:
how you gettin' home, kid?

I CAME HERE so no one would fucking care!
I CAME HERE for the god-damned floating hair!
I'M NOT HERE for any salvation!
I AM HERE to scream out
into the night

like a lost vampire bat!
like a roaming ronin!
like a sinking ship's siren!

Father,
you ask me for a confession:

“You led Lord Satan into my heart
the minute you mentioned him.”

“Lord Satan has yet to let me down.
He's yet to ask me for forgiveness.”

The Basement Show

cold air
snowy mountains
someone's gonna get hurt
that's a guaranteed bet

My first time at *The Temple*,
after I found the headliner's demo
at a yard-sale down the street—

smog of cigarettes
cackling in the corner
someone's gonna cry
"ain't gonna be me"

This is where the "art kids",
(those who couldn't hack it) live,
snorting coke
with money
they didn't earn.

eyes burning
drums rolling
grind of guitar
whirr of dance

I'm having some shitty beers,
the kind you buy when you're broke.

Still, pretty good.
Still, gets a guy
nice and drunk.

dresses aflutter
bread and butter
watch your wallets
don't sit on needles

It's jacket weather out here
and everyone inside is ripe
for a lil' pickpocket parade!

*broken bottles
torn up shoes
someone 'round here
sure has got the blues*

I dance on the floor
maybe once,
maybe twice.

I scream into the night
like a vampire bat!

*fire away!
sure thing, bud!
is that blood
sweat and tears?*

I dance
until my toes bleed.

*broken blood vessels
ruined voice boxes
eyes rolled back
someone's car alarm*

I sing
until I can't sing anymore
for the rest of my life.

*motorcycle revs
fog clears again
promises broken
erase the memory*

I sit on the back steps
and bum a cigarette
(*your brand*) and cry
for the first time since
the day you left:
*hollow-eyed
and high*