

as I rush to greet you

dejection followed you through the door
a blanket of lead dragging behind
seeping into every corner of your being.
I greet you and try to interrupt the flow
switch your focus to lighter things
you raise a jouster's lance
I pull away from your irritation
from the other end of the cold hard floor
I ask if you're ok and a strangely algid
ratifying answer nullifies me.
your lead face-shield slams shut
I feel foolish for having asked
I sit tacitly and wait for any clue
that you are open to interaction
but you sit immobile beneath lead armor

silence...

I want to poke you
with a long stick

silence...

once you threw open the door
happy to smile at my every pun and
engage in prolific wordplay
you couldn't wait to fluff my hair and
nuzzle my neck, kiss my lips like a starved
man finally given a meal
you loved to come in and reclaim
our hidden retreat of romantic chaos
I know that the world is an unkind place
but it is hard not to feel out jousted
when I am so anxious to see you
and lance and lead armor speak first
to blunt my approach

silence...

I'll sit quietly by
and hope you don't die
of lead poisoning

when starting over does not start

I wish the blank page would not stare back at me
white with thin blue margins that expect to be touched
with freshly birthed thoughts
 and ardent phrases
its stark emptiness reminds me that half of my closet
is empty and your drawer in the bathroom is scrubbed clean
I wish the page
 would just fill itself
with something--anything--with whatever is next
so I don't have to think about empty spaces and what is lost
no words come, my stifled fingers
 have nothing to secure
blank__ empty__ space__ oh, your parking space
will be empty when I get home from work, you won't
come through the door with
 the day's exploits to share
there will be silence, like the hush of the vacuous page
I'll eat a frozen meal, put my fork in the sink--it will be empty too
there will be no parley
 over tv programs
and silence will drown out anything I choose
when I give way to sleep, your favorite red-flannel blanket
will not cover our feet
 you won't lie next to me
I will awake to the shock of emptiness you designed
space that you surrendered, the nothingness that remains
again, I will fear a barren page
 that laments about the void
I'll have nothing to offer it. thoughts dulled by sudden
change from fullness to emptiness--from love to despair
another blank page will surely stare
 and find me starring back

hindsight is 2020

dry ocean

it had to be filled with water in the early years
the ocean left its ridge marks on every bluff
and reached into each valley with a cutting wire

as I drive northwest, I see hills shorn neatly
and compressed with a vast clay potter's trowel
larger rows behind and smaller rifts in the foreground

I see red rock "waves" with sand-crested froth
that mock the thriving ocean I left behind
but these canyons are cragged by winds and time

nature's great banding wheel, chipping slabs,
sculpting tools, and ribs have so masterfully shaped
these breaking waves of rock, wild grass, and sage

land is carved and hollowed out as if a skilled hand
held the modeling tools and delighted in caressing
small hills, buffing them smooth with sponge or shami

I am inland; there is no water to push and shape
no oceanside to quench, refresh, and texturize the
shale cliffs that overhang to mimic bursting waves

there is silence when I stop to hear the ocean
though it once had to be here--it is many centuries past
the birds above are not seagulls, yet they caw

no water rushes to clear the heat of the sun from my skin
and I am given to understand the drought of separation
you were my ocean, and I am inland

hindsight is 2020

between the gusts of addiction

it started out as a tropical gale, but I was
soon fighting to keep hair out of my eyes
it whistled so loudly in my ears
I could not hear anything that was said to me
it started to twist and turn and push me down
I was bumped, bruised, and knocked about
unconscious for unknown intervals
always scratching up from a wet floor
with a chilling tornado waiting to fight me
trammel and abrogate my very soul

the squall ripped away at my caustic layers
blasted and leathered my skin
hurled bricks and boards at me erratically
I could scarcely lift a hand to block the foray
a whirlwind of beatings came each time I stood
when I leaned into the wind, it would change
directions and throw me to the ground
suddenly it swooped me up and jerked me into
the twisting stillness of the eye of the hurricane
where I took a deep and tremulant breath

I could see others trapped like me
in whirlwinds of epic proportions, dying,
cold, wet, ripped apart, finding no way out
I caught sight of my grieving loved ones
as the whirlwind heaved me out and dropped me
alone in my familiar pile of mistral ruin
I saw you beckon me to come out of the blast
I reached toward you with all I had but the
impetuous wind choked my attempt and the
door blew shut in front of me

in an odd moment when the wind waned
I found the strength to crawl from my squalor
to a place of contingent refuge
inside, the buffeting could not reach me
the pushing and swirling stopped, and I stood still
assessing scars and bruises of my own making
dry and awake, I fought for change and healing
for acceptance to calm the tempests in my mind
though this twister seems to have passed
I will forever beware of the slightest breeze

hindsight is 2020

in God's acres so far away from me

Cemeteries, graveyards, catacombs, necropolises, and crypts,
the augural boneyards that provide a “grave” environment
for all to comprehend the solemnity of the final situation
to pour out grief at a terminal conclusion that has arrived
whether expected or by complete surprise.

These are the part-honorary, part-abhorrent places
where we smile through our tears and comfort each other
bringing crucial civility to a ghastly nightmare
covering up-turned dirt with extravagant flowers
and putting lipstick on pale grieving faces.

The potter's field strips out memories and suppresses
just enough to allow colloquy with quiet emotional peaks
denying the severity of the moment, allowing distinguished
rituals to honor the once-vital life of the deceased
before the numbness subsides and the real missing begins.

Mausoleums, charnel houses, sepulchers, vaults, and tombs,
where loved ones are ashed, shelved, and given back to God
before the phases of unspeakable anger and denial arrive
a place for prayer and connection with the excursive soul
a curious pause before the requisite forgetting begins.

Oh, child that filled my life, how can you yet be gone?
no poignant memorial can begin to touch the void
no emotive song can carry away a single thread of grief
no sympathetic onlooker can lift the inviolable spell
that holds you apart—in God's acres so far away from me.