

Visitations

Ours is a fractured romance. We appear
to each other in so many disguises.
You stumble on the beach and presto,
we're two French soldiers in a trench
touching fingers in a rain of mud and blood.
We might be making love when, in the pale light
of dusk, your ecstasy becomes
a killer's mask. I wrestle back my scream.
When the weight of your need collapses me,
you are the infant, chewing on the sinews of my heart.
Like shadows, they're an overlay
upon the day we're living, a transfiguration.

No one knows how many times we're born
or why, life after life, this joy and devastation.

Nocturne in Blue

Mutable as a cloud
sculpted by wind, I didn't
understand the boundaries of skin.

Then the heat of your hands,
a cradle for my cheeks,
fingertips at my brow,

how you tilted
my face, left to right,
like holding rare fruit.

Our lips almost touching as we hummed,
we played with oscillation and pitch,
until our notes met and split and met again.

A kind of mating in mid-air,
voice to voice,
intimate as sex.

I mortgaged half my life for this,
willing to ride the chaos of your moods
just to steep in those rare pools of resonance.

After you died, I listened deep
into the night until I heard
the frequency of us.

Now your absence reverberates
through my cells, the shush-shush
of the sea seeping through the blinds.

Upon Waking

A full-bodied NO
flutes

through the hollows
of my bones, oboes

my blood.
This one-sided argument
colonizes my days.

Even my fingernails crack
at the shock of it.

Our symphony flattens and thins.
Nights swirl empty
of stars.

Dust slams my windows,
scrapes under my doors.

My mouth is a desert.
Grit coats my teeth.

My ears throb
with listening.

Your silence,
my uproar.

How Did He Die?

He died—because of the flu,
I mean, the flu caused fluids
to mass around his heart.
He thought it was pneumonia.
He couldn't take a deep breath.

His heart was OK—so they
discharged him from hospital.

He died—from a panic attack.
No, it was panic
that sent him back
to the ER
where an intern learned
the hospital had taken him off
his meds for bi-polar,
the ones that seemed to work,
but this was Texas
and they didn't use that brand—so
he was put on a new pill
but because the number one
side effect was suicide,
the doctor made him sign a pact
with his brother not to do it.

He died—because he was tired
and he couldn't sleep,
no, because he thought
he was dying anyway,
slowly, the pain
around his heart, he couldn't
take a deep breath.

He died—because he
didn't want to wait.

Ascending Mt. Jerusalem

Why this urgent fever
to scramble up and over, blood
ringing my ears, tremor
in my legs?

I stare at the cliffs, rise
through red cedars
and lemon scented gums. Gather
dusky coral peas and a parrot feather
to place at the top.

To taste your lips
I lick my own.

Do you hear the crunch
of pebbles? Remember how
knees and ankles crackle, the pinch
of toes inside boots?

On the wind, a whiff
of your musk.

Through the mayhem
of cicadas, a scarf of mist,

I hoist my body
into cloud.

Is this heaven then, smudged
edges and muffled noise?
I sprawl against granite.

All this climbing for the vista
and I'm enveloped
in swells of fog, dizzy
with loss.