

# THE RAVEN REVIEW

LITERARY MAGAZINE



VOLUME IV, ISSUE II

APRIL 2023

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April 2023

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*Cover Photo:*  
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*Addison Affleck*

## **After Loss**

Frozen, I lifted the dagger from my palm. The blade bit into the creases of my hand, filling my mouth with the taste of metal and rust. Yet, oddly, my skin remained colorless; those familiar ribbons of red paint failed to appear. Then I realized I felt nothing.

That was Friday—when I learned I had forgotten how to bleed.

“Everyone must lose something so that they can become stronger,” my mother used to tell me as a child. “Pain makes you stronger, empathetic. We all must lose things.”

“Is it scary?” I had asked her.

“No, don’t worry. It won’t really hurt you. You won’t even particularly feel sad. You will just wake up and it will be gone—and you will be stronger because of it.”

As I grew up, her words followed me. Whenever I lay down in bed—eyes closed, breath still, ears pricked—I thought of the many things I could lose. Uncle had only lost his tie, not evening recognizing his loss until just before Mom and Dad’s wedding; I wanted my loss to be like that too, something simple and meaningless. As the morning air flowed, I stared at the ceiling and made a long list of all the things I couldn’t exactly remember the names of. In one way this exhilarated me; it gave me a sense of power and hope that the future wouldn’t be so bad. Yet also I was afraid, afraid of losing the few things I cherished, and at the back of my mind I feared that no matter how many things I wrote down on my list, my loss would never be among them.

Dad never told me what he had lost before he died. They say losing your life doesn’t count, so it must have been something quite shameful to quiet such a proud man. I pictured him telling my mother—standing with his fingers twitching, whispering between soft sighs. I imagined my mother, his opposite, reciting the same speech she always quoted—something about not feeling sad, that the *wrongness* will pass, that it will make him stronger. Suddenly, a part of me realized why he had never told us.

My brother lost his eyes a couple of years ago. He told us from the crack beneath his door frame, then locked himself behind it for a long time. Sometimes he let Mom go in there with him; I imagined her piercing eyes gazing sharply into his butchered face. When my brother finally opened the door, I was careful not to stare too long at his new appearance as I grasped his hand and ran down to the basement. There, I asked him what it had felt like. He didn’t answer for a while, which prompted me to look up at him. At this, our eyes met, and he gave me a cold, punishing look—the kind that makes your heart feel smaller. “It felt like nothing,” he whispered.

That’s when I figured that Mom must have been right about it all.

So, I stood there, dagger in hand, feeling the Friday wind blow my hair and chill my face. I felt nothing. I ripped the knife from my hand and stabbed it deep into my chest. I didn’t bleed.

Then I walked to Mom’s room. She sat reading a small book on the grandfather chair. Only did she look up when I whispered her name so softly that I didn’t think the air had even

heard me. Silence fell around us, as though we were stealing ourselves for some sort of surprise. Then she let out a shrill kind of sound and ran to me.

I looked down at the knife inside my chest. Streams of red liquid poured out of it, running down my shirt and all over my pants.

“I feel nothing,” I said softly.

Then she looked up at me, as though this were something sad, so I kissed her as I realized how much stronger I had just made her.

*Antony Shaw*  
**Word Count**

As he left the house that morning, Lucy launched her engagement ring at him. He wanted their daughter Samantha to grow up proud of him. Samantha had a fever, but Erich was determined to hit his word count. His publishers were excited.

The chilly winds in the high street seemed to blow Erich to a new place: Cafekaesque. A sign: “Welcome Writers!”

Inside, it smelt of frothed milk and coffee.

A young woman with a septum piercing greeted him.

“Welcome, I’m Astral! Have you been before?”

Erich shook his head.

“Let me tell you how we work. We welcome writers to submit their word count for the day, and we make sure you hit it. All you have to do is buy a drink and write. Sound good?”

“Course.”

“Super. Just jot down your word count on this piece of paper and I’ll take it with your order.”

Erich jotted down his word count, handed it to the girl and ordered a pot of Earl Grey. He watched Astral walk away as he took a seat. Her gait pleased him.

He studied his partially completed story. Where am I going with this? How am I going to hit my word count? Just put something down. You can edit it later.

He scratched out a sentence; read it back. That’s crap. Hit delete. Took a sip of tea and glanced around the room. People hammered their keyboards. Don’t panic. Even Tolkien had bad days.

Fifty words. Erich shut the laptop and headed for the toilet. It smelt bleachy, like Lucy’s hands on Sunday mornings. He shook and put it away. He thought it best to postpone. Go home and start again tomorrow. Fuck it!

As he headed back to his table, he saw his laptop was open. Astral stood in his path. “Sit down and write.” She thrust a biscuit into his mouth and looked at his work. “Not even close,” she said. “Drink more tea.”

She was gone.

Erich sat. His hands were cold rakes—incapable of typing. Colours bled together. His mouth filled with thick saliva. Every customer ground their teeth. Left, right, left, right, left, right.

“Shut up!”

Left, right, left, right, left, right...

“Shut the fuck up!”

Left, right, left, right, left, right...

Silence.

He drank more tea and typed. Lose yourself in the words, Erich. Was it the hope that was killing him? The publishers had said they were excited. Did they say that to everyone? Probably, but then again maybe not. Erich was embarrassed about his family background, which in turn made him feel ashamed of himself. He did not want the same for Samantha.

Astral walked by and smiled.

A paragraph. Not his best. But on the page. Tea went through him. He headed for the toilet. She was in there. Stood waiting.

“What are you doing?” he said, at the door.

“Astral pulled him in. Her breasts against his chest. She kissed his neck.

It grew. “I can’t. Sorry!” Samantha and Lucy flashed across his mind.

“Fuck me. Fuck me. Lucy won’t know. Samantha wants a brother.” How does she know their names? A bolt of pain as Astral ripped his ear from his head. Blood ran warm down his neck. The smell of iron filled his nose. Erich screamed.

It was over.

Astral was gone. He clamped his ears. Both were there. No blood. Thank fuck! Erich should have been disappointed. He couldn’t force it. He splashed cold water on his face and thought about his word count.

He sat and typed. A few minutes of success ensued. Pain jolted through his fingers. He enjoyed the pain, like an ulcer you can’t help but finger. Key strikes wore his fingers down to fleshy stubs. Blood smudged across the keyboard. Astral brought napkins.

“Need a top up?” she said.

“Definitely,” Erich replied.

He checked his word count. Not bad.

Astral left him with a brimming pot. Erich poured and missed his cup. Boiling tea scolded his hand. The pain turned him on. He didn’t stop. His flesh melted like hot candle wax. Colours mixed. He filled his teacup with the pulpy flesh and muscle. He ran the boiling tea up his arm. Flesh and muscle fell away like a well-cooked pork tenderloin.

“Excuse me, sir?”

“Huh?”

“Sorry, sir,” the writer said. “Your coat just fell from your chair.”

“Thanks.” Erich checked his word count. Close.

His phone buzzed. A text. Lucy: “Samantha is struggling. Hurry back.” Fine, he thought. He closed the laptop. He saw something on the floor, something that was previously obscured by the laptop. On his hands and knees, he saw an ear. He felt the side of his head. A wet hole. Astral stood before him. She pushed him with a sharp heel.

“Look on my works ye mighty and despair!” Her voice, bestial.

Erich craned his neck, saw the kitchen door licked by green flames. Indescribable forms crawled from the fire. Beasts of the ancient world unleashed to feast on humankind. Erich watched as countless things poured out. People devoured. Heads squeezed. Teeth shattered and



eyes burst. He smiled. Willed more. The demons kept coming. He watched them possess and slaughter all.

“Shit! Lucy and Samantha?”

Astral helped Erich up.

“You okay?” she asked.

Silence.

“The word count?” Astral said. “Did you hit it?” He had: 666.

His house was dark and cold. He flicked on a light. A note. Lucy. She had left and took Samantha with her. She said he needed to get his priorities in order. Wished him luck with Astral.

Erich’s novel was published. Samantha would be proud. He enjoyed his riches alone.

*Ashtyn Layne*

## **Madmen Know Nothing**

I apologize for stapling the shades shut.  
I couldn't bear the thought  
of fire in the room we painted  
last January.

Rather, I watched six months pass in the darkness.

I have kept you awake in the closet.  
The sweaters of your childhood winters.  
Shirts of a man I never met.

I still look at the letters with no return address.

I still read through the notebooks,  
where you signed your name  
in your lover's spit.

A ghost could never do that.

But a ghost would never come back.  
I have lost nothing but my grasp  
on the divide between shadow and flame.

The rest is stored under the floorboards.

It pounds on the cherry wood  
begging to be released  
so it all may pass through the gates.

*Charles P. Tillery*

**Todash**

He fell into an emptiness like sleep  
Somewhere between waking and dream  
And drifted alone in the darkness  
Down a viscous, ink-black stream  
His feeble attempts to call for aid  
Produced only silence, no scream  
He was gaunt and tired and hungry  
With a face as pale as cream  
Because his blood was drawn from him  
Through wounds made by a fleam  
His captors were vicious and thorough  
They worked on him in teams  
Concocting vile contraptions  
Employing clubs and blades and steam  
But they lost their hold on him  
When he slipped between the seams  
Where the only sound he heard  
Was the splashing of the bream  
On their journey between realities  
On the path along the beam

*Corey Bryan*

## **Sonnet for Spring**

Spring marches its way south, inundating  
the winter steeled earth struggling to drink  
the season's flood. So I bide time, waiting  
for thirsty trees to flourish red and pink.

Yet when the heavens seal their divine doors  
and the portal outdoors reopens wide  
the red-pink promises of spring are floors  
of brownish, brackish sludge when rain subsides

The birds are singing, or are they crying?  
The mud is clinging to every footfall  
Grasping with desperation, decrying  
walks in the woods, holding me in its thrall

So I yield to the season's iron will  
and listen to the songbird's somber trill

*Drew Pissarra*

**Beckett's 88<sup>th</sup> Psalm**

I'm buried up to my neck in shit.  
My breath can't hold out long.  
I see the world from a sinking pit  
where I'm pressed to write a song.

For yours is the glory; you can resurrect  
as a Peep in an Easter basket.  
And mine is the fate of the derelict  
who put all his eggs in one casket.

*Duane Anderson*

## **An Exploration for the Truth**

Searching for the truth,  
who do I ask?

I tried myself,  
but I was of no help.

I tried my other self,  
but he too was of no help.

I looked toward the sky,  
searching for a revelation,

hoping one day,  
it would appear.

*Eliot Ku*

## **Mushroom Picking**

I was seven years old when Father decided I was old enough to pick mushrooms with him. It was just two of us, since Mother died when I was a toddler. He and I lived an insular life together, and thus I accepted Father's words and ways as absolute. It wasn't until many years later that I could even begin to comprehend how much I had normalized his behavior while I was growing up. I don't mean to say that the mushroom picking itself was abnormal, but rather that the specific type of mushroom Father became obsessed with, an extremely rare species of perfect texture and flavor, of an almost seductive appearance, that blessed its user with a heavy euphoria, could only grow on corpses.

I still remember my first mushroom picking experience. Father took me into the mossy inferno of an old growth forest toward the end of winter. We had had rain for weeks and it was pouring rain that day too. After traipsing off trail for an hour over large fallen Douglas fir trees, through seas of fern, and beneath curtains of Spanish moss, we came upon a decaying cadaver the color of a radical sunset. Father said it had been a suicide. I was shocked by the abhorrent beauty of it. Dozens of mushrooms sprouted from the body in striking and colorful clusters like daylight fireworks: they grew from the eye sockets, displacing those deflated bags of dark gelatin, and they emerged from the gaping jaw and between the intercostal spaces like the gnarled fingers of an impish creature tearing its way out in slow motion. I helped Father fill a trash bag, not leaving a single mushroom behind. He asked if I felt bad once we were back at the house and stripping the cold from ourselves beside the oil-fired furnace.

I said, "No, not really."

And he replied, "Good."

Our infrequent pilgrimages revolved around Father's scouting trips to find suicide victims in the forest. It was a better bet in the early spring when those unfortunate folks made it through the long dark winter only to discover there was nothing waiting for them in the light. Father would carefully meter out our supply of mushrooms through the following winter and make inky-iridescent preserves in case there was a shortage of bodies to be found. The mushrooms replaced the sunshine during those winters and bridged us to summer when our spirits were up once again, and we didn't have as much of an emotional need. At least, at first.

But Father was changing. For one thing, his liver was failing, and we didn't realize it because he never saw a doctor. His behavior also became erratic. He began experimenting on neighborhood cats and dogs that he killed and then placed in terrariums in our shed, hoping their corpses would be suitable as growth substrate. None of that worked, however. He fixated on gathering more and more mushrooms, even year-round, and he was increasingly irritable as attempts to grow his own went belly-up.

I started growing sick of mushrooms prepared with nearly every meal of the day, and I didn't eat them much anymore. Now a teenager, I no longer had interest in going mushroom picking either. I wanted to break free of the spell, face my own internal darkness in a different

way than Father. But I was afraid to tell him. I was not worried about disappointing him, so much as something else I couldn't quite put my finger on. One day, as he was leaving for a harvest, I told him I didn't want to go anymore. He looked down at the threshold of the door for a long time and did not speak. Then he looked up and directly into my eyes.

"Son, what am I going to do with you?" he asked. Then he repeated it, the second time more a statement than a question.

It was around that time that our life became more social than it had ever been. Father began bringing guests to the house on a regular basis, young men and women who were either passing through town, looking for odd jobs, or both. At first, I was jealous of Father's apparent affection for these newcomers until I realized he wasn't exactly taking them mushroom picking. Even though I felt I had grown beyond it, the tradition was still mine and his after all. In this way, it was always going to be a part of me, no matter how far I tried to distance myself. But I stopped caring for the most part. I would learn the names and faces of these young men and women and then never see or hear about them again. Like most teenagers, I was largely indifferent to the lives of strangers.

Then Father brought Laura around. I only met those he introduced me to once or twice at most, but Laura stuck around for a little while, and I was happy about that. One look at her awoke such emotion within me that I didn't know I possessed. I was always at a loss for words and stumbled hopelessly in her presence. And although our exchanges were brief, that week she hung around was the longest and sweetest of my life. It's silly when I look back on it now. I had a way of recreating and embellishing the events into an unspoken budding romance. Oh, the sneaking glances she used to give me. The subtle brightening of the eyes. The little half-smiles. And each night I dreamt of kissing those full lips I believed would cure me of the loneliness I carried through life, the loneliness which had returned now that I stopped eating the mushrooms. Father could tell I had feelings for Laura despite my attempt to maintain my usual detached demeanor around her. One evening as he and I sat at the dinner table together, he paused to rotate a mushroom on his fork, holding it against the light and eyeing it like a gemologist with a precious stone.

"She reminds me of your mother," he finally said.

"Who?" I asked.

"You know who."

I did not see Laura again.

I was angry with Father for a long time after that, but not forever. Considering the intimacy—if that's what one would call it—that he and I had developed over the years, I expected him to tell me honestly and explicitly what it was he had been up to, and what had become of Laura. Yet he remained silent. He was more at peace than ever before, as his health continued to decline. The day I finally built up the courage to confront him, he was too encephalopathic to converse. Father was a miserable spectacle at the end. He had become large and yellow and often short of breath like a storybook beast. He raved and repented and then retracted those repents. He told me never to tell anyone what we did.



“What you did,” I corrected him.

“You always knew,” he said with a withered smile. “You were a good boy, too. You kept quiet. I never lost my trust in you.”

And then he was gone. His pupils were already so dilated, I could barely tell the difference.

He’s buried at the old church down the road. I visit his grave every year or two, usually in the spring, about the same frequency and timing of our early mushroom foraging together. I brush the remaining dead leaves away from the gravesite and tidy up a bit. If there are mushrooms growing on that little mound of earth, I leave them alone. It’s never easy like I hope it will be, now that I have little else to quell the darkness that squeezes from within and pulls from without. The mushrooms are hypnotizing as an act of violence, always beckoning, and they will do in place of memorial flowers on Father’s grave.

Maybe a small part of Father would be content that I’ve tried to be my own person, that I’ve tried to overcome those weaknesses of his that I can recognize within myself, but I will never be sure. Sometimes I get the sense that he is smirking down on me from Heaven, like he still knows something about me that I don’t. I worry maybe the view is much clearer from up there.

*Ellouisa Chen*

**Mirror**

Such a great thing of beauty, you were,  
When I first laid eyes on you at the  
Antique shop at the end of the lane;  
And I knew I had to bring you home.

You stand tall in my room,  
A proud accessory while I groom  
Myself in your presence,  
You watching my every move.

Now I have strange dreams of you,  
And I cannot bear to look at you.  
When I stretch my lips into a smile,  
My reflection returns me a death stare.

*Grace Dubicki*

## **A Change is Gonna Come**

It wasn't that he thought he was above keeping lookout—it wasn't that at all. He knew someone had to, and the fact that McGrath trusted him to do it meant a lot in and of itself. He knew the train and the others were coming regardless and then he'd get in on the real fun, so there was no reason to worry. He just didn't care for all the time waiting around gave him. It made him think too much about this business, and how much he was beginning to detest it.

The new horse shifted underneath him, snorted, took a few sideways steps to the left. It was impatient. He missed his old horse. This one was fine enough, a gelding with a proclivity for loping that was taking some getting used to. His old mount had been seasoned. He could count on that horse like he could count on the sun rising each morning—until it had shattered its leg, of course, as they were fleeing their last job. Its right forefoot had landed some one-in-a-million shot in a snake hole at a flat gallop. He and the horse went down in a screaming tangle and when the dust settled McGrath had ruled there wasn't anything to do except shoot it.

"I'm sorry," McGrath had said as he holstered his revolver, "I know you liked that one. But you ought to be goddamn glad your neck ain't broke, son."

He *was* glad. But it was still a shame, losing that horse.

He was sick of the bandana tied over his nose and mouth. Every time he exhaled the breath came back hot over his face, his beard. His shirt stuck to his skin, and he felt sweat collecting on the inside of his hat. Between its wide brim and the bandana, he couldn't see very much; the moon was just a faint scratch against the blackboard sky.

He only had to be sure of one thing, though, and that was the pistol resting on his leg.

It felt heavy in its holster, expectant, and impossible to ignore. He didn't mean to be so good with it, but if you were one of McGrath's men you specialized in something, and he wasn't any cook or pickpocket. They always stationed him at the end of the job in case lawmen turned up earlier than they wanted. The others handled guns well, but not like he did. He wasn't fond of killing but only doing what you were fond of never made anyone a dime. Killing lawmen wasn't the same as killing normal folk, anyway. He had no qualms against it. It was a lawman that had gone and shot his daddy in the street. It was a lawman to blame for what had become of his mother. If he could have his way, he'd have trekked the country and shot himself a sheriff for every day of the year. He would leave.

But see, that there—that was what sitting and waiting got him. It got him thinking crazy things, like deserting McGrath and the others. The thought itself felt like misbehavior. He reached down and fixed a stirrup to look busy despite there being no one to observe him. He straightened, restless as his new loping horse. He looked out in the distance, down the snaking line of track that twisted beyond his vision. He stared hard at the vanishing point he knew the train would appear from as if he could will it to come chugging his way. If they could just get on with it...

What if he *did* leave?

The idea had been in his head for about a month, ever since their last bank robbery had gone gravely off plan. McGrath hadn't remembered to pull up his bandana as they were fleeing, and by complete accident, a woman had seen his face.

"Shoot her," had come McGrath's immediate order.

He had. With immediate compliance.

It disturbed him. Made him wonder things about himself. Ever since, he would have liked to get on with his own plans, plans that did not involve McGrath. He could do it. He *could* go. Right then, if he pleased, because he had never been more perfectly alone. He had food and water, and a horse that wanted to bolt. One nudge of his boot and he could be—

The vanishing point brightened. A stupider man might have thought the sun was coming up early and low and from the wrong direction, but he knew it was just another night's work on its way. His thoughts of desertion crumbled around him. A hand went for the gun and its weight left his leg. *Click*. It sat ready in his fingers. There was whooping and hollering far in the distance as the train thundered up the track and he dared to guess it had been a good haul, or otherwise an easy one. He kicked the loping horse into action and raced to meet them. He asked God for there to be no snake holes.

He could wait until the next job. Next job, he'd ask McGrath to post someone else on lookout. He just didn't like all the time it gave him to think about this business, and how much he was beginning to detest it.

*James Joseph Brown*

## **Exploration**

When the world was an ancient  
map and water a cure for hunger  
I climbed the steps of the sanatorium  
and spent all day in the salt cave

breathing, just breathing, once  
the doctor narrowed her eyes  
at the screen, stopped smiling  
politely, said hmm, now that

is something, lab results pending  
frozen in my chair, the long wait  
the map on the wall, gorgons and  
hydras biting the corners, the sun

and the moon serene and unbothered  
the depths of the ink blue sea

*Jess Focht*

## **Ocean Meditations**

We hear seagulls shriek, but I  
think they cry out in rejoice to the sea.  
We may never know what they're saying, but  
sometimes I know what they mean.  
The current is  
Expansive, peaceful, dangerous,  
and salty.  
It carries things  
Creatures, ships, trash,  
our worries.  
We float for fun and come to it  
for relief.  
Virginia Woolf loved the water  
So I'm not surprised she let it take her.

*Lisa Lo Paro*

## Looking for Layla

“You are the moon, lofty and bright, and I am a vague twinkling in the background of the night.”

D’you like that? I wrote it for her. In the beginning. I think it was after our first date, but it was definitely around that time. It was like love at first sight, you know, I know that sounds ridiculous, hokey—I *saw* that—but it was. She felt it, too.

It must have been one of our first dates because I came home alone that night—you know, being the gentleman, after I dropped her off—and there was a full moon out. I’ll never forget it. Just a huge fucking orb hanging in the sky, like a goddess was winking at me: *She’s the one. Don’t let her go.* All that.

How long we were together? Three-ish months. Give or take.

That’s right. About a week ago. I last saw her then.

No, she seemed normal. Fine. Well, kinda pissy, if I’m honest. She was like that toward the end, so it *was* normal for her. I’d sent her that letter, a final letter. A love letter. The one you have. I spent time on it.

Yes, a little.

Poems, stories. Got a novel stashed away somewhere. I’ll get back to it one of these days.

Letters? I’d written her a couple. Just a few. D’you have them? All of them? Yes, well. Maybe I’m an old-fashioned guy, I like to sit at a desk and write things out, with a real pen, I mean, I’ll text and stuff when I need to, but I think the little things matter. Gestures, going the extra mile. I think she liked that. The little things, that showed I cared.

No, she never answered. When did she go missing again? Or when was it reported?

Just curious.

Yes, Tinder. I’m a modern guy *sometimes*.

Oh sure, happy to cooperate. I wish I knew more.

Oh, it was a very quick visit. I was just in the area. I wanted to see if she’d gotten my letter. It was decent stuff, you know. I’d been thinking of putting some of it into the book instead, spoken by the protagonist, but I sent it to her. But she wasn’t ready to get serious, to give us another chance. I saw her outside. She met me outside. No, I never went in. That’s right. Around that time.

Sure, I’ll take a look. Like I said, happy to answer any questions. This is actually *just* like I imagined it would be! Such a scene from a book, or a show. Yes, I’m paying attention.

Hmm. I’m not sure. They look familiar? Well, I guess a lot of men wear those, don’t they? Basic work pants, twenty-something dollars at Old Navy, I’m sure. Is this—evidence? Where did you—I mean to say—is it—

Yes, that’s quite the stain.

Distressing, to say the least.

Thank you. Yes, I'll be fine in a minute.

I'm ready. Yes, ok.

Her reaction? To the letters? When I saw her last, you mean? Well, you have already taken my statement. And as I've said, she was unreceptive to my offer to renew our romance. Maybe she had someone else, she didn't say. Yes, I left at that time, quite disappointed in her. She wasn't who I thought she was after all. It's hard to be a romantic, you know, to read the signs correctly. Sometimes they're actually trying to tell you something else. And it wasn't until after—

After? A figure of speech.

Later, I meant.

It wasn't until later that I realized she wasn't the moon at all. She was the darkness.

Yes, that's all. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. Hah!



*M. Gleason*

**Stillness**

I'm lying in an ocean so still  
Where the water is warm  
Wrapping me like  
A silk dress, hugging me  
Like a loving mother  
My arms are outstretched and  
I can't see past my fingertips  
Just the turquoise blue  
North, south, east, and west  
I look up at the sky  
No clouds in sight  
Not a single creature crosses my eyes  
A realization-I'm not close to land  
How did I get here?  
How do I get back?

*Madelin A. Medina*

## **Remains**

Mortar me into the façades of those buildings  
down Rue de Dunkerque. Spread me like another  
face of paint across their weathered wooden doors.  
Then, encase me in a tomb beneath the cobblestone.

Burn me alive in the glow of the artificial lights  
that flow through the corridors from room to room,  
permeating apartment windows. At dawn, let me turn  
to ash—the velvety powder off the white moth's wings.

Drown me in the Seine—have my dress turn into arms  
that reach for ankles, wrists, and shoulders; into fingers  
that clench to bruise the skin. Find me beneath a bridge,  
belly up and glass-eyed with river water in my lungs.

And, let them do what they please with what remains of me  
when I arrive—a corpse—on the Atlantic's western shore.

*Margaret McGowan*

**Daytime Moon**

“I will look for you in every lifetime and love you there.” —Kamand Kojouri

You came back  
as a brown recluse

spider, wove  
a web of wind

around my heart,  
swung yourself

across the threshold  
just to say goodbye,

the voyage of a ghost  
who knew one world

was gone. A soldier  
you never met played

Taps at your headstone,  
the daytime moon

hung low in the sky.  
Freshly plowed dirt

covered your grave  
like a Texas Star Quilt.

Most saluted, their tender  
gestures joined with silent tears,

the engraved letters  
of your name

still visible  
in the starlight.

*Meilyn Woods*

## **Dinner is Served**

My name is Mom. Sometimes Mama, formerly known as Mommy. I can't remember what I went by before my belly was consumed in pale stripes that I sometimes trace. My work is never done. There's always laundry to be folded, boo boos to kiss, lives to nurture, and a husband to deal with. The best thing is to suck it up like I do the dust bunnies. Sometimes I give them names. Billy after my oldest and Johnny after my youngest.

I love my children, but when I drop them off at the bus stop, I'm overcome with relief, followed by a heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach. When I enter my driveway, my toe eases more and more on the gas, and I wonder what would happen if I didn't stop. But I do, my bumper inches away from the garage door. I smoke a few cigarettes in the car instead, and I bite away at my yellowing nails, leaving nothing but the skin. I chew them up and they scrape my throat. I hate to admit it, but it feels good.

I don't remember not liking children. I longed for them at one point. Billy is in little league, Johnny plays chess. I have to drive them to practice, pack their snacks. Remember that Billy likes the crust cut off his sandwiches, and Johnny doesn't like his food to touch. Then we'll do homework: algebra then fractions. All before my husband comes home.

If asked, I'll say that my family completes me, but it's not until one of them is sick that I remember that I know how to heal people. I yearn for flu season, for sniffles and aches, and I think about what could have been as I spoon feed them cough syrup. As I clean up their toys, I reminisce about the time when they were still inside me. I trace the lines on my stomach through my shirt, and I remember that I had a cesarean. I wasn't afraid because I had done one before. That was when I fell in love with cutting.

• • •

I make dinner every night. On Monday, we had spaghetti, Tuesday was taco night, Wednesday we had clam chowder, Thursday was meatloaf. Friday is always a challenge. At this point, I'm out of ideas but the boys refuse to eat leftovers, and as I scrape the remainder of the ground beef and mashed potatoes in the trash, I wonder what we'll have for dinner tonight. The kids are playing catch in the living room even though I've told them a hundred times not to play with balls in the house. They've already broken a lamp.

I pull out my recipe book. It was a gift from my mother-in-law.

"You'll get a lot of use out of this," she said to me, and I remember thinking she was a fool. I was too busy to cook, but in the end she was right. I run my fingers along the spine that's been repaired with duct tape, before flipping through the yellowing pages. They feel waxy to the touch.

*Preheat the oven to 375°  
3 cups of pasta (uncooked)  
3 tablespoons of butter  
1lb ground beef*

I brown the rest of the beef and remind myself to add it to the grocery list. The sizzle and steam overcrowd the kitchen, leaving only room for me. I like it this way. The rattling of the spice drawer overpowering the sound of Billy daring Johnny to do a backflip off the couch. I check my inventory: salt, pepper, chili powder, paprika. Now Johnny's crying, and my eyes are watering.

*1 medium onion, roughly chopped  
4-5 cloves of garlic (My husband hates garlic, I'll do 6)  
1/3 cup red bell pepper, diced.*

I make sure to dice them well because the boys don't like red bell peppers. They don't like any vegetables, but I make them because they're good for them. Antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, all those buzz words. What they don't know won't hurt them, but just in case, I put my foot in there to keep them from complaining. The key in getting kids to eat their veggies is knowing how to make them taste good. Most moms will lie and say that the secret ingredient is love, but my secret something is better. I let the meat grinder do most of the work. It lets out an ear-splitting sound, probably from the nails. An extra dash of cayenne will cover it up, and so will the cheese.

*Bring a pot of water to a boil  
Combine the meat mixture and the sauce  
Bake for 30 minutes*

Now, Billy is soothing Johnny, while I tend to my stub. I had never gone this big. My tweaks were usually much smaller, a pinch of salt, some hair, extra butter, eyelashes. It worked for a while. No more tears and the picky eating stopped. But it wasn't long before I started to bald, and they demanded a new meal every night. Today I served dinner, and they loved it. The kids fight for seconds, and they beg me to save the rest for tomorrow.

While they eat, I teeter around, picking up shards of ceramic from the carpet. I remind myself to buy a new lamp. There's silence at the dinner table, which is new.

"This is good, Mom," says Billy. "But what's wrong with your foot?"

"Just a little sauce," I say, adjusting the hem of my skirt. The bottom is embroidered in blood.

It's not long before their father comes home for dinner, letting his suitcase fall in the entryway. He unfastens his tie, and kicks off his loafers, which I place on the shoe rack. Then I

ready his plate. Two heaping spoonfuls with bread on the side. I set his plate across from mine which is now cold. He sits down as I place his beer in front of him.

“Dad, Billy broke the lamp!” Johnny yells.

“How did that happen?”

“He hit it with his baseball.”

“Because you didn’t catch it,” said Billy.

“I thought I said no baseball in the house,” he said, making eyes at me.

“I told them to play outside.”

“Then why is the lamp broken?”

“I’ll buy a new one,” I said, picking up my silverware.

“My mother bought us that lamp.”

“And you hated it,” I said. “Besides, you always complain about the light bill being too high. Problem solved.”

He got up from the table abruptly, taking his plate to the couch. He didn’t like it when I mentioned money. I didn’t work anymore, and that changed things. He knew that but would never take the blame for it. I wasn’t oblivious to the fact that we were scraping by. My allowance dwindled as the weeks went on. We wouldn’t be getting a lamp anytime soon. When I go to the kitchen to clean, he follows me and proceeds to scold me in front of the children. I hate when he yells but I don’t blame him. He can’t scold anyone at work. Besides I’m mad at him for reasons that are bigger than this.

“What if I went back to work?” I ask.

At that, he takes a plate from the sink and smashes it, and I bend down to collect the pieces. He yells at me some more, but I only catch a few words. Instead, I trace my fingers along the edge of a knife. He’s the provider. I should respect that. So, I give him one of my ears and finish my dinner in peace.

• • •

After dinner, I put the children to bed. This night is different because I carry my recipe book to my room. I make notes in the waxy margins.

*\*One foot gets kids to eat leftovers*

*\*One ear stops fights*

When my husband comes in, I feel my body tense. He changes out of his work clothes and proceeds to join me in bed. I keep my eyes in my book, burying my nose in its pages. My husband scolds me again. I know I shouldn’t be taking work to bed. It makes him feel unimportant. I’m afraid to tell him that he is, that sometimes I hate Billy and Johnny, and I hate myself more for hating them. He tries to undress me, but I hold the book close to my chest.

When I start to cry, he yells at me for making him feel bad. So, I close my eyes and let him have the rest.



*Raina Alidjani*

## **The Night Mother**

“This property is truly one of a kind,” the realtor beamed as we descended the staircase. “The original floors and fixtures are intact and so well-maintained. Usually, people gut these old homes and start fresh.”

“The antique finishings were what drew us to the house. We never wanted to change a thing—only enhance,” I said, and my husband nodded in agreement.

A pit was forming in my stomach. The move felt right in theory. The city was getting harder to live in. Being unable to find parking and needing to lug groceries a block was not what retirement dreams were made of. Still—the thought of leaving the place we had nurtured new life in felt a little like dying prematurely. Even if that new life had grown up and moved across the country to start a new life of his own.

We sat at the dining table to discuss numbers and figures—to put a dollar amount to our life.

“Now, before we discuss the listing price, is there anything I should know about the house?” She drew out her pen and notebook.

I shook my head. We cared for the house almost as well as we had cared for our son.

“It’s perfect for families with babies,” my husband chuckled, “the night mother helps.”

I kicked him under the table. The last thing we wanted was our relator to think we were insane.

“The Night Mother?”

“Our son was great at sleeping through the night. We always joked that it was something about the house. We called it the Night Mother.”

• • •

The fugue state was what I called the newborn phase. The mixture of exhaustion and endorphins made for a hazy recollection at best.

The night I returned from the hospital with my son, still bleeding into my disposable underwear, I fell into the deepest sleep. I expected it to last only two hours before the wails for nourishment began. That’s what the nurses told me to expect. Instead, I woke up soaked and swollen, my breasts leaking around me, wondering why they hadn’t been used.

I woke my husband in a panic, and we ran to the bassinet. I picked the baby up instinctually, waking him from his content sleep to ensure he was still with us. As I began to breastfeed, feeling the release of the stored milk, I fumed.

“Why didn’t you wake me to feed him? Did you give him formula instead?”

“I was asleep just like you were. It’s been exhausting.” My husband scratched his head.

“Sure, sure. Then who put him in this new swaddle?” I began to cry. During the fugue months, everything made me cry.

“You must have. You probably woke up, fed, and changed him and don’t even remember.”

“Do you think?” My sobs began to subside.

When I went to change his diaper, it was clean and fresh. I checked the pail. On top was a dirty diaper neatly folded. I must have woken up and done my motherly duty. It was the only explanation.

I felt like I’d gotten a whole night’s worth of sleep, though, and that nagged at me. I should have been spent with bags under my eyes, but there I was – chipper and ready to face the day. And so, I did, forgetting the whole incident as soon as the baby spit up on me.

That night the same thing occurred. And the night after that.

“The Night Mother must come and take over the night shift,” my husband joked anytime I got anxious over my apparent memory loss. “I’d enjoy it if I were you. I know I am.”

• • •

After a few months, we moved our son to his own room. I was anxious to have him apart from me. I never remembered caring for him at night and wondered if I would wake up to do it if we were in different rooms.

“We’ll have the monitor; everything will be fine,” my husband reassured me. “You can put the volume so high on this thing you can hear a pin drop.”

That night I did wake, though—to the sounds of singing. I didn’t recognize the tune, but it was melodic like a lullaby, a young woman’s voice—sweet and sad.

“Tony,” I kicked my husband and whispered his name. “Someone’s in the house.”

He popped out of bed with a yell. “What are you talking about, Mary?”

The singing stopped abruptly, and with it, the light on the bottom of the monitor that signified noise went dark.

“In the baby’s room,” I whispered and pointed, the blood rushing from my head.

We both sprinted. The commotion had woken the baby, and I pulled him into my arms as my husband searched the house with a bat.

“And why did you think someone was here?” He asked, out of breath when he returned to the room. “All the doors and windows are locked.”

“I heard singing coming from the monitor.” I was still shaking but tried to calm myself. “And do you smell that? I think it’s perfume.”

“It’s the city, love. Someone might be playing a song next door, and it comes through the walls. And I won’t complain about a nice smell wafting in for a change.”

He patted me on the head as if I were the child and returned to the bedroom.

That night and the following three nights, I tried to sleep on the rocking chair in the baby's room to no avail. The baby would only sleep when rocked and demanded to be fed every other hour. It was exactly what my friends told me having a newborn was like, and it was hell.

"He knows you're there, and it's disturbing his sleep patterns," my husband rationalized.

"I was there when he was in the bassinet."

"Yes, but now you are sitting up and not comfortable. You're probably moving all around and making noise. Come back to bed, will you?"

And I did, and I heard the singing again. Instead of running into the room, I turned down the volume enough to drown it out. The baby didn't wake me once.

From then on, I left well enough alone. My son remained seemingly well-fed, clean, and cared for, and I felt rested, and that was enough for me not to press the issue further.

I came to enjoy the scent of jasmine and bergamot that greeted me in the nursery every morning.

• • •

"I could have used a night mother when my children were young," the relator chuckled. Suddenly her smile faded, and I saw the hair on her arms rise. "Come to think of it...."

"What?" I pressed.

"When I did a property audit, I did see that a woman died here right after giving birth to a stillborn." The relator furrowed her brow as if it was painful to think of. "She committed suicide in what would have been her baby's room."

"Do you think?" My husband began to chuckle and shake his head in disbelief.

A tear rolled down my face that I quickly swatted away.

"So silly for you to bring that up from twenty years ago. It was a joke, that's all," I regained my composure. "However, I would love to find a nice family with small children for the house. It would make me feel that it still was well-loved."

*Renee Rivera*

## **Lonely Little Land**

Off the beaten path, there exists a small town,  
A settlement plagued by a constant bombardment of rain,  
Where the leaves on the trees are persistently brown,  
And there is never an outgoing train.

This town can only be viewed from afar,  
From the comfort of a passing airplane,  
Or the distance of a racing car,  
The only way to enter this town is through the faulty imagination of one's brain.

When examining the town, a passerby will find,  
Quaint houses and businesses and stores,  
And at that point they may feel inclined,  
To think staying in this town may not be such a chore.

But they will soon realize this inclination is incorrect,  
For when they notice the stillness of the world that surrounds them,  
They will begin to suspect,  
This town is a place they want to run from.

When one sees these grounds,  
Time seems to screech to a maddeningly slow pace,  
To the point where one feels as if they have drowned,  
And will never again know the warmth of the sun on their face.

And on this dreary little land there is but one permanent subject,  
A lonely individual who sits on a bench in the outskirts of the town,  
And watches the vehicles that pass by with a longing affect,  
Before beginning to completely break down.

That single town occupant is me, the only person on that land,  
And that lonesome land is not a town but a state of mind,  
It is grief, a way of being that others rarely understand,  
Unless they are within its grasp, the penitentiary to which I have been assigned.

*Richard Merelman*

## **Don't Say You Weren't Warned**

The wilderness extends from here to there.  
Be careful. If you're in a hunter's blind  
From now to then, the wild is everywhere.

Perhaps you dream you dance like Fred Astaire  
On ceilings. Don't you try it. Change your mind.  
The wilderness extends from here to there

In thickets, brambles, jungle rot. Beware  
Of mires; leeches dine on humankind.  
From now to then the wild is everywhere

Blooming in parking lots, a county fair,  
Neighborhoods where rates of crime have climbed.  
The wilderness extends from here to there:

A barren heart, a knife, a failed affair.  
The rite of blood is never far behind.  
From now to then the wild is everywhere

Disguised. You say you're civilized? You swear  
It? Telling lies is how you've been designed.  
The wilderness extends from here to there,  
From now to then. The wild is everywhere.

*Sean J. McKnight*  
**Unknown Father**

My mind often wonders,  
Frantically at times,  
Searching for answers,  
None I have found.  
Your name is known,  
But you aren't known to me,  
Who are you?  
My mother is silent.  
Ear-piercing silent.  
I have cried in pain.  
To no avail,  
You are still a mystery.

*Shamik Banerjee*

## **An Elegy for a Daughter**

For the daughter in heaven's grace,  
who left this earth at childhood's face;  
to ports afar from mother's eyes,  
in treasured form of infancy,  
is freed from holds of woes and cries—  
I sit to write her elegy.

Six years lived she and taken thence  
by the Lord to his orchard, dense:  
with flowers and shade-lapping trees  
and huge, rundle-like stars of gold,  
where brushes the light, tidal breeze  
in kingdom of her new-come bold.

In womb's care, her spirit was sent,  
so together, her joy be spent—  
through years of beauty, smiles and growth,  
in concerned heart of mother's boon;  
but welkin's choice, did make the oath  
to take her presence very soon.

The Lord did think, "Such holy birth,  
is made not for this mortal girth  
but for the state that lieth here,  
on land eternal, free of age  
with beatific fays poisoning near,  
from transitory days and stage."

She made was not for nature's laws,  
nor brevity of bliss and loss;  
but regally, to make her tread  
in true bearing and elation,  
with deference from genteel stead  
send blessings to whole creation.

An angel so, when she was born—

as lightsome as a dawning morn,  
now sits beside a gurgling brook,  
with radiance of love doth stare,  
which chunters to her lovely look,  
“Thou art within my love and care.”

Now she is nigh a verdured dene  
and friended by a lough serene;  
now she is merry by a rill,  
where ireful combers do not wave;  
now she is peaceful on a hill,  
where fearsome tremors do not stave.

Her grandparents, despair and feel  
the trenches of her death's ordeal;  
her kindreds too now sorrow make,  
yet, one warm cause their ruth console:  
from this forken world, she did brake  
than being on its soreness to condole.

And though her mother's iris weeps  
to weep how far her daughter sleeps;  
does finds her in lilies of peace,  
and ken in other maiden's smile;  
and with these thoughts, light succor ease;  
and with these thoughts, to breathe awhile.

Whose posterity could not bring,  
the dewdrops of a newer spring;  
sweet lassie at inceptive years,  
could eldern days, not touch or goam,  
but with her cheeks of fledgling tears,  
in palace of clouds, made her home.

Now when thro' window, comes a draft,  
inkles the mother to her craft;  
she sets to her verses indite—  
among odes, dirges and proses,  
against the day or falling night  
and to adorn her with roses.



To God, when anthem, she doth pray,  
she wishes coming of the day,  
to hie where dwells her daughter's soul  
and embrace her in bosom then,  
their tie, where will, reawake as whole  
and joy in them, re-home again.

*Shannon Winestone*

## **Hideous**

Do you have color in your cheeks? I watched  
Your lilies singe in crimson flush, your rose  
Recast in bloody shades of Lancaster.  
And like a tolling bell, your body swayed  
Because they knew you lied, that time you bled  
Them dry and said, "I don't know how they died."

With every vowel, every consonant,  
That stumbled out your mouth, disgust grew like  
A cancer in the lungs, or a toxic plant.  
You tried to mend your quilt with patchwork lies,  
Deception woven like a tapestry  
With wooden-nickeled affability.  
So let your "fringe" unravel, let it go  
That you may lie exposed as night draws nigh,  
That morning's light may shine upon your deeds.

You stood there frozen like a startled doe,  
Lost in a blank and vacant haze, so still--  
Each strand of hair a work of art, your eyes  
Of Ceylon blue sublime. They were the Nile,  
And like Parmenio's son, I sank and drowned  
In you. Those pretty fools all sighed and pined  
And cursed the day church floors were swept by lace  
(White as the virgin snow, her bridal train),  
When to the sound of bagpipes, promises  
Were made. For them there was no greater bliss--  
Slow coursing of your fingertips. My rose

Recast in pallid shades of Yorkist woe.  
For now I see the pretty fool is me,  
And now what once brought mirth is hideous,  
Like one who sought a paramour with hips  
And thighs like marble, ice. "Closed eyes would cast  
A greater spell; cold limbs would bring more bliss.  
Your voice could utter neither 'Yes' nor 'No'.  
Oh object of diseased desire, you slept,

Slept on and on and would not wake; no breath  
Rose from your lips—your frigid frame so still.”

I cooked the meals and scrubbed the tiled floor,  
Immersing me in life’s mundane routine.  
But then your name came falling from all lips,  
Came flooding all my zones, like breaking news,  
Just in. Those thoughts of you invaded me—  
A Gog and Magog of the battered brain.  
They scaled the walls like mighty men of war—  
My battleships now plundered, broken, swamped.

If you have lit my pyre, if I’m on fire,  
Then you must burn and turn to ashes too.  
Because it’s not enough that we have read  
The same old works of literature—not  
Enough that numbers addle both our brains,  
That you observe the horns (their height, their breadth),  
And I do so in quietness—my thoughts,  
Directed more towards the ancient past.  
For if you’re frost, then I am glowing coal.  
If you were Persian, I was surely Greek.

My tears should stain your face instead of mine.  
I’d be the victor, not the vanquished one,  
Repay Thermopylae with Salamis,  
Sip your Assam. Ukrainian grain would fill  
My fingers, like an English lord or like  
A Russian czar—two lands, two roots of me.  
A Lyssa rage, a paralyzing fear,  
The voiceless bird inside a gilded cage--  
I’d pour my agony upon your soul,  
Come flooding all your zones, like breaking news,  
Just in. It’s hideous, like one who loves  
The rack, the iron maiden, and the screw.

I cannot be a pillar in your temple.  
I hate the standard that you bear, so why  
Do you pervade and haunt my every thought?  
I rise up from my sleepless bed each night,

Now pacing back and forth, now wishing you...  
 But yet I deem your tyrant's dream to be  
 No better than a menstrual rag. You'd love  
 The sound of jackboots on our streets, a bust  
 Of Castro gracing every public square,  
 A granite Lenin peering down state halls,  
 A marble Mao directing courts of law,  
 With Stalin scowling at cathedral doors.  
 And you'd be there to crown each one with gold--  
 An acrid taste now left upon my tongue.

It doesn't matter what you named your son,  
 Or that He made your root spring from the land  
 Of crimson maple leaves and from the land  
 That birthed the guillotine, or that we both  
 Are wont to linger at the glass. Oh you—  
 A bleach-stained dress that would no longer do,  
 No longer do. I swore it with an oath;  
 I said, "Adieu." Now, Antinous, I'm through.

My mind a Gaugamela rout—in flight  
 I left my shield, my mantle, my war-chariot,  
 My bow; my soldiers bled out on the plain.  
 My head lay on the pillow; I could feel  
 You sinking in, dreamt whispered pleas and sighs.  
 It's hideous, like when King David had  
 To have Bathsheba, like a trophy or  
 An Ammonite crown. In the evening air  
 He watched her bathe and brought her to his bed,  
 Then spilled Uriah's blood to take her hand.

The wind—I'm jealous of the wind that swept  
 Her fingers through your hair. I grudge the rain  
 Because she soaked your clothes and touched your skin—  
 Elysium of vales and snowy peaks,  
 Of wild nights, of mooring in a sea,  
 As beautiful as blue-green lakes and hills  
 Of islands west of Portugal. The place  
 Where fury once erupts and bliss ignites  
 To quell the storm, to calm the raging sea.

For seven years complete you drank their blood,  
Partook of feasts where man was duly served.  
But Sappho's fingers struck the lyre; she sang  
A piper's song—stirred up to highest treason  
My quickened pulse against all reasoning.  
Her final strains fade into frenzied haze—  
No wild nights, no mooring in your sea!  
The wounded voice my scorn; my eyes leak tears  
For them, but I would kiss your mouth in secret.  
So I can't meet their gaze, or speak of you  
At length, lest someone turn to me and say,  
“Do you have color in your cheeks? I watched...”

*Shawn McCann*

## **Betrayal**

The story of war lasts forever,  
each day with a different sky and  
the same sun. My fight  
is not with any foe, but  
with the seasons of my soul.

There is no escape from the inward eye,  
searching to find myself.  
Treachery writes the woes of my heart,  
time marked by water dripping  
from dank-rust faucets.

Tally marks on the wall,  
etched with red salt—  
in the end, I must flee  
this wasteland of  
disappointing expectations.

*Thomas Piekarski*

## **Suppose**

The surrounding crystalline air  
suddenly detonates,

Unexpected destiny slaps you  
across your puzzled face,

Documented crimes profuse  
as astrological truths,

Moon obscured in the haze,  
you're all alone,

Unicorns sprout up, announce  
they'll trounce hate,

Light boomerangs and sizzles  
as your stomach growls,

Every breath's a measurement  
of time already spent,

Solstices beget solace and minds  
bubble in formaldehyde,

Magic proliferates, world aflame,  
your passion hits overdrive,

Immaculate dreams swirl and spin  
in the infinite data stream,

Grossly fragmented, you crave  
reintegration,

An unflappable clown is crowned  
king of creation.

*William Grussenmeyer*

## **Hate Being Blind**

I hate not being able to see your smile bright.  
I hate not being able to enjoy the waning evening light.  
I hate not being able to get in a bar fight.  
I hate not being able to marvel at the stars in the sky.  
I hate so much I feel like I will die.  
I hate not being able to look at myself in the mirror.  
I hate not being able to see the clothes I wear.  
I hate not being able to see your loving stare.  
Or your concerned look of care.  
I hate not being able to drive you around in the car  
I hate not being able to see a movie with beautiful stars.  
I hate being blind  
I hate not being able to read your signs  
I hate people being unkind  
I hate losing my mind  
I hate telling people I am fine.  
But your love makes me happily rhyme  
And my hatred melts away just a tiny bit when you are kind.



*Zachary Hartung*  
**My Beautiful Day**

Must you set so soon  
My bright, beautiful day?  
Must I be bound again  
To crawl the nightmare's bay?

Your morning graced me light  
And brushed my dewy eyes,  
Kissing my ears with melody  
From the newly risen sky.

Icicles encrusted above  
From last night's bitter hell,  
Were blown into streams by your afternoon breeze  
Reviving my mind a wishing well.

Your silk velvet robe of your evening sky  
Flamed with beauty in warm violet,  
Danced its fragrance into my memory,  
Delaying the darkness behind it.

Now again the night engulfs my sense.  
Indeed my day you were sweet relief,  
For in this void of chilling stillness  
I bear once more the gunshots of grief.

Please return,  
My bright, beautiful day.  
Please don't leave me  
In the nightmare's bay.