

2
POEMS



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1

We have become accustomed to contracts for everything. We have avoided everything resembling a *pact* because a pact cannot be rescinded; it is either respected or broken. And in the end that is the hardest thing to understand: that the effect of negation depends on the positivity of a common, that our way of saying “I” determines the force with which we say “no”.

–Tiqqun, *This is not a program*

We were never part of the Swiss Hardcore scene, not really, I was a bit too young and you, younger still.

It was never about the music, anyway, nor the smartly-run squats, certainly not the country itself.

But simply the way lines were drawn between point A and point B.

–

It's been weeks since you came home with me that night wrapped around a bottle of red.

When we woke, you turned and said I
looked so 'smiley'. I replied that
I felt lucky to have such a
beautiful woman in my bed.

—

It's getting ugly here,
the generalized crisis hits home,
with the cops and developers
crawling on their corpulent bellies
through our streets and alleyways
in direct proportion to the number
of spit and polished poems,
*every note, every chord, every soft-focus
photograph*
we make
for rusting water towers,
for decrepit loft spaces,
for oh-so-lonely train tracks,
for what is just about to happen.

Seems whenever our sand castles get
their last turret in place
the tide comes again.
So we pace back further
the tide comes
and further
and further
till we're hauling sand into the
farthest reed.
Every fucking grain
is precious.
So we just carry sand in our shoes,
in pockets, between
thumb and forefinger
and build wherever we can.

—

Here is a seed to worry — not grow —
to dry and crack on the sill,
to watch the sun and the rain.
Here is desire.

Aching towards hope.

My God how rare this is
to just sit on the sidewalk
and share a glass.
Clang clang tink clac clang!
Watching the neighbourhood
slither past.

We made it downtown.

We held hands as we held the line.
The line (was) moved.
I was left behind
kettled.

“I don’t want you to get used to it...”

...in the shape of a kiss
the agitation continues
as exquisite as broken glass
in the yard at Pelican Bay.

—

I will draw you a butterfly
and tell you it is a brick
wrapped in a butterfly,
translucent wings that shimmer in
the light.
You will feel its weight.

—

Outside, everywhere, it is burning,
except there is no *outside* anymore,
the line cuts through the middle
of each of us,
everyone is a burning building.

They’re using phosphorous bombs,
the bastards. Bodies are arriving
at the hospitals and morgues with the
meat melted onto their bones.

The dead almost always walk together.

The above line is stolen, wrenched from context. We are mid-November writing for a fake July.

This is so fucked,
so sad, so obviously
typical. When did this kind of tired
become the norm?

—

A man puts a digital camera into his mouth:

- a coat with frayed sleeves
- cracked boots
- the curve of the nape of her neck
(in grainy black & white)
- a violin
- a bed turned in on itself
- a plate with crumbs and dust
- a bike with a bent wheel

—

The city divided — tongues roll
out and crash. *They* think the 80s
were all neon — jumped up cocaine bright
screaming hubris — but it wasn't,
I wasn't. Grey skies day after day,
everything dark and dull,
said it'll trickle down, down low, down
to the crack alleys, workfare – warfare,
waiting for the bomb.

—

It's getting ugly here,
we spilled half the wine,
there's nothing left but rubble.

Remember the sound of rain on a tent
during a summer storm?

“What happened to our plans, man?”

Now I’m writing a song that’s not really
a song (more of an excuse),
cos there’s nothing genuine in music
anymore.

Except, of course, when there is.

We are never enough
until we are.

—

Here is a cluster bomb
to rip into soft skin,
to funnel smoke into the screen.
Here is democracy.

Here is our responsibility
to the ground we walk, to the food
that rises out of the stink,
to the still starving and inconvenient,
to the ears that see nothing
and the eyes that are left on the shelf.

Here is fear — tremulous
and reflective — your hand in mine
as exquisite as broken glass
in the yard at Pelican Bay.

2

I flirted with you all my life
Even kissed you once or twice
To this day I swear it was nice.
But clearly, I was not ready.
– Vic Chestnutt, *Flirted With You All My Life*

The promise of dirt is seductive.

The beasts outside are braying. Just kids,
a bus full of them doing art and bagels.
It will never work this way for you.

The sky does not reflect the ocean,
it is a common myth and an unfair
comparison. Between your cancer
and their 'surgical strikes', this latest
heartbreak and the end of Salmon,
Starlings and a certain species of Cedar,
there is nothing to compare.

It is abject, beyond the pale.
At best it is redundant.

A house that folds into itself.
A paper bird.

The night you told me, on the stoop of the
Ukrainian church — with drawn out
breaths and nervous laughter — we walked,
hands held, down the ruelle. How do
we measure sorrow? With balls of rolled up
tissue, or the sighs that hang above the still

warm bed? What was unthinkable became
just another *thing*, tragic and mundane.

Pigeons circle overhead like signposts,
outlasting most storefronts here.
The night doesn't fall, it gathers.

&

Our words remain static.
Language shudders under the weight
of irony.
Over time, the search for form
will leave you hollow.

So, be careful with each other.
Be kind.

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