

May 2018



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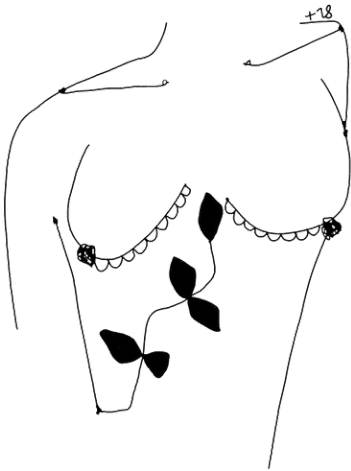
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Dasha Lebedev



These sky lines resemble the dead.
Hanging from twilights string,
These spent wicks of industry,
Wings clipped so as to never wake
From sleeping.

These streets were
meant for walking once.
These streets were
meant for talking once.

These streets were once

Juvenile springs,

Jovial.

Not yet orphaned
By iron shrieks

We could keep our laughter alive
Before the canvas of gravel rolled out.
Rolling, round tides of familiar flares
Stared back at us from neighbours.
Love was less a Labour than the sport
We collectively kept holy.

- Blissful Nomad

The Faults in Our Desire (excerpt)

There is poise there
The way you mould my laugh
With the softness of your hand
And place it back
Inside my mouth
With the fondness of your grin.

Lervneie .S. Chenge

She's gone with the wind
But she's latched on to you
Longing to be loved
Painting pictures of desire
As you fade in and out of the scene
Lost in the whirlwind
All she wanted was you
But in the end all she got was art

So where do I start...

Alicia Evon

" It is the best of times, it is the worst of times "

Why

Stuck in a vicious cycle
Low mood, anxiety and poor appetite
Sleeping and drinking taking away all my time
Hinderance to feel, restricting my ability to express.
Dreams turning into nightmares
Xannys making it go away
Also taking with it, the power of lucidity
But its finally time for the healing.

Healing from the scars left by her
Healing from the bad decisions taken by me
Healing from the tornadoes of my childhood
And, healing from the people I've let down.

I'll rise through the ashes with a smile on my face
Because time is not on our side.
Mama said I could become anything I wanted to
But all I've become
is just, older and colder.
I need a place to take this off my shoulders
A place where I need not suppress
A place where I can only progress
My happy little place
And maybe, it's right here
Between your arms

Saunak Roy

*I draw a cruel line
between these witty
backward assumptions*

*I end up dancing
in hazy, scattered disruptions*

*No justice
No peace*

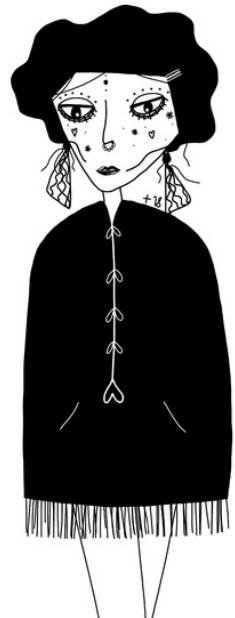
(zuri)

Why,
is a sticky trap
cementing regret and
remorse to cells replicating,
unable to get past.

How,
removes the constraints
on questions asked,
wrestled, and
cried over.

What,
a propellor
of movement forward,
of owning and responding,
a collaborative effort with how,
to move through and
reframe why.

Kimmie Harper



When that voice speaks
to you, when you
hear the echoes and play
them, when you let
yourself be a human
partition in divine hands,
there is music
A.S.

★ Despair and exuberance
are much closer than we
think. They reside on the
edge, facing each other
at both ends of the
spectrum of our emotions
🌟

When the Heart Speaks

by Sophie Anne

You know how much you love someone, not during the happiest times, but the most painful ones. Those dark spaces have a way of outlining the light that is.

In the dry expanse of physical distance or separation, when time stretches after uncaring things were said or done. Locked inside, willpower fired up, ready to burn bridges.

But your heart just won't have it. And it stays open no matter what. Something bigger than you and larger than life washes away your frustrations, the resentments built up, the walls meant to protect from further dissatisfaction.

Priorities shift once pain brings love to the forefront. In that most difficult space, the only thing to do is surrender.

I've realized that it wasn't darkness I was afraid of. It was the blinding light that suddenly opened my eyes to something I couldn't control. Understand. Explain. Suppress. I might as well try to delete the air we breathe. In fact, breathing has felt like a privilege lately.

How peacefully I suffer right now, because I know for certain all that you mean to me. And as I can feel your heart tighten, miss a few beats and sigh in synch with mine, I feel the love between us. It's alive, it's powerful, and it won't shut up.

Laughing Owl
Sceloglaux albigacies

We were attracted to extinction's discordant music.
Settlers with an ear for the drowsy pastoral or energetic
Sea shanty could seduce us down from the forest's dank
Edge. We were suckers for European gypsy ballads or
Scottish litanies on the accordion; the raspy breath of
The finger-machine spoke to us of living in similar
Hardship. A strange key change for a predator to go
Belly up; we were able to handle the new arrivals, mice
& Pacific rats we just ate along with the rest. Prions that
Nested too close or weta that grew too haughty thinking
The carboniferous had returned. We were great pets
Naturally, tame as neutered livestock we lived wisely
By your side like monks. Mercenary stoats ransacked
Our timid stone monasteries the day the laughter died.

B.R Dionysis



Wanda Fraga Sánchez



I can't see the sky (cover)
tension
camuflaje



The Last Sacred Place

Roger's tank of gas alerts him that he is almost empty. He stops at the closest gas station. \$5.65 into the transaction, he is accosted by a Mormon who tries to recruit him to his cracker ass religion. Roger asks him how much they are paying.

The red-haired kid straightened his black tie and smoothed out his white dress shirt. The gas station sign promised ninety-five-degree heat.

The kid says its more like a calling from the lord on high.

Roger says I'm not looking for a retirement plan right now.

The streets lights turn on when Roger struggles to get a full basket of laundry of the back seat of his car. The door keeps automatically closing. A mother and her three children happen to be entering the establishment at the same time. One of the scrubbers kicks Roger in his shin, but he holds the door open for them anyway, despite the strain of the weight of his laundry. Roger considers this his good deed for the day.

Roger must wash his buddy the Buddha when he pays a visit to the laundromat. The laundromat represents a sacred place to him. Perhaps it is the last sacred place left. Nothing bad ever seems to happen at the laundromat. Maybe it is something about the obelisk-shaped doorway, or the clocks on each wall, or the spin of the washers and dryers, and the family that has been running the place for years. It was started by a guy called, Deadhead. Live concerts of, "The Grateful Dead," can usually be heard playing on the overhead speakers. If not The Dead, then derivatives of. And smoking pot has been somehow legal since the places establishment: back in 1978.

Roger wipes away the dust and grime that collects ceaselessly on the statue of the Buddha. It collects on all things, above, and below. Roger and the Buddha spent many nights together in the laundromat. A lot of bad nights, filled with desperation, confusion, through the worst of them, the site of the Buddha, sitting there never failed to make Roger laugh, even if it was only a little. They endured many horrors together. Some of those times Roger did not know if he was going to make it out alive. The least Roger can do is clean the Buddha, pay a little respect. He smiles when he gets the wiping down with a wet towel. Some of those nights in the laundromat, unspeakable terror advanced like the hordes of old, zeroing right in on Roger, from all angles, and he did not know a way out until the clothes finished their process of cleaning. During times like that, Roger cannot imagine better company than the Buddha. He never talks to Roger. He never gives any advice. The Buddha only is a statue after all. That would be ridiculous. But he never stops laughing, that is for damn sure. What is he laughing yet? The murky waters of existence people like to think of as life. And what is to be done about it? Roger cleans the Buddha whenever he stops at the laundromat, even though he knows he will only get all dirty again. It is an effort to perform the old ways. In the hopes of creating a better now, and then. When he does this, he gets a call feeling, and knows one way or another, things are going to turn out all right, if his part continues, or not. Deadhead said he found the Buddha outside the firebombed the village of Danang, and somehow he made it here, through time and space, to make Roger able to shoulder the burdens of the day.

Now time to get on with more pressing matters. He throws all of his clothes in the same washing machine. He does not care, that the colors and the lights are all mixed together in there, pummeling each other.

Atomic Clock

Too cool, really, to have an effect on anything but the trees and bush and flowers. He needed no jacket as he thought now and again of the tick that kept silence from his kitchen. No one else he knew owned a clock. Not a foul sweeping clock with the second hand gliding from number to number stealing too physically ephemeral too on the nose too serpentine. No his was paced so each moment could be drilled in and if you listened closely if you sat at your table until the sun set and sat under a light. One bulb. The key was patience and space. Before he moved his ash would lilt up and halo the filament guarded yet so hot it stained just from it's own glow he'd take one more drag and pause. The cigarette would begin to eat itself making silver lines and become indifferable to a log in a fireplace where the nature met the paper there in the fire you'd catch just a glimpse of and then the second hand would tick. Couldn't do that with slithering hands across your moments. He pulled on his jacket and shut the door and was gone.

Wong's was the best Chinese buffet Louis'd ever been to at least while he'd lived in this town which was a few years now. He had yet to find one that had as much without introducing something so exotic as to put him off. Peering beneath the sneeze guards at crowned prawn, a slush odor just faint in his nostrils. They were surely to be taken away soon but he wondered how long it would be he didn't want to chance a rank sickness, it'd ruined everything tonight but he needed something to do with his hands he always got so nervous when clients met him here. In his office it was fine he had plenty of bric a brac to fidget with or better yet he could finger a bone dragging on death to add to the mystique clients typically wanted when coming to a gumshoe. Private eye. Whatever the nomenclature was today. But there was a smoking ban in public places so when he met clients for lunch he made sure to pick somewhere he liked. Somewhere he knew. You're going to get a lot of information with each new case, many new details over and over you'll need to know them all before you even let them know you'll take it and knowing where you were kept you from figuring out if you liked whatever vegetable was seasonal. Good detective work was focused. It didn't keep you guessing. It was his job to guess and he liked to do it as little as possible.

Lo mein like worms were chilled on his plate when she arrived. Probably felt like a bizzaro brain from those halloween pranks that he'd heard about constantly but no one he knew'd let him be blindfolded in a dark room to touch the contents of a bowl. Heard the story dozens of times, he knew it like dawn, peeled grapes as eyeballs yada yada yada. Clients had more concerned versions of this tale twisted beyond belief but that still took root knowledge of this original fable he wondered if the perversion of a childhood tale made an easy motif when thinking of ways to seduce children or if they thought they were being clever. What's worse a lazy pedophile or an unimaginative one? Questions like that only crossed him after the shock wore off when years ago he had to find a new line of work. Stop taking those cases. He never knew it until he found a shoebox or some encrypted drive. Nowadays if there's some cache of information involved he turns it over to his client and let's them deal with it as they choose. Might be called to testify if he see's what's on there and being under the scales of justice never troubled him he'd done nothing wrong not too wrong not too soon anyway but in those courtrooms he was never under those scales, he was weight. Noodles congealed and jiggled as she placed her hands on the table.

"Excuse me"?

He'd left his gun at home. Usually you don't need one when you're meeting a client but when you're meeting in public especially in a divorce case or when there are suspicions of infidelity it helped. No one is more jealous than a cheating spouse. And if they suspect their spouse is cheating then it's best to have a gun lest they think you're party. Ambush you as soon as you got outside and even if they kicked the shit out of you they wouldn't for long Wong's was always busy. The place was open twenty-four hours some drunk or widow or another coming in and they'd get distracted or Jamie King, the owner (her parents married years ago but she thought it was best to keep her grandparent's name attached to the sign. It was cheaper.) would come out with her pump action. It was this knowing that kept him alive. She'd tell him what a dumbass he was and that he had to stop this from happening so close to the door it scared people but he'd buy her a drink and ask if her son decided if he was going to Drexel or not. That was after he'd put his own taurus snubnose against their skull and simply asked if they were cheating. Clients loved to see confessions under duress, that was common everywhere though. Cut down on billable hours but sometimes you just have to play your part.

"Louis, I know you hear me".

But he'd forgotten his gun today.

And though he loved his ticking clocks they kept his house from being too quiet especially nowadays that it was just him and the clicking humming refrigerator as he sat at his table with one chair he would click and hum with the clock and light and refrigerator and air conditioning and the house would be full of appliances and you could walk by and see the lights on and every function would appear to be running nicely especially the man sitting at the table he was quite functional really hadn't needed maintenance for years and you'd walk on knowing that house was empty.

They're both accurate, sweeping clocks and ticking clocks. As accurate as you made them. S'pose any clock could be wrong, but you know the saying about that. Though even if the clock itself is wrong in measure it is always correct in one sense: that it is moving. The notion of running out seemed silly but stagnation even worse. If it was finite it had mass and if it had mass then surely one could.

"Louis, look at me".

There was no need because it was smoother than that. There would be no pause once he met her gaze. Just one more tick and his brains and blood would ruin Jamie's table cloth he wondered if she'd retire the cloth itself or have it dry cleaned. Sometimes after hours she said everything even the food was passed down from generation to generation. They'd all laugh and she'd buy them all a round and cheers would go up so that was probably the last thing he thought as one very loud flash and one very loud bang tick, tick, ticked.

OWL WINGS

I conjure some deep and potent medicine, as the full moon rises through the back of the yard. Coyotes howl, owls who. I stare at la Luna fiercely into her crevices. Noticing every crater, every shift of shadow, she becomes so vibrant she seems unreal, like a tv picture. As the smoke curls around my body, I ask for the owl wings to cleanse me. They flap fiercely and with great power. Knocking loose the things I hold onto so tightly.

"This will initiate great change, only invite it if you're truly ready for something difficult to fall loose. Something you've been clinging to in perspective, or some greater truth you have closed yourself off to. Be assured in the acceptance of this energy." Light and open the heart flowed through the fire. Crackling and popping the flames dance like serpents, rising through the night.

The heart enchants in laughter, skinny dipping beneath the starlight. Emerging smoked, winged, dedicated, soaked, and connected to source. Every cell awoken by the tender companionship found upon this earth.

Dozens of gulls fly out over the stormy ocean. The waves swollen and crashing. The sea green glass of their curls still appearing inviting. The raindrops fall, like blessings for the succulents. The tide pools submerge. The wind is cool and pierces the bone.

The gulls catch the current with wings spread open through the heart, widening into release. The thrill of the moment. Conjured by nature. The raindrops fall like tears from the sky. The delicate drop of each individual bead of rain across the ground brings the mind to tranquility. All energies wash to neutral.

Giving the whole earth a refresh of heart. The energy releases, and the body feels free. I am at home, riding the current. Called by a force of nature.

I walk out the door. A rainbow crescents across the heavens. Vibrant as the golden sun highlights the gray sky. I exhale deeply. A second, slightly dimmer, rainbow appears above the first. A magical double flutter to the heart. I chase the rainbow down the sidewalk. I follow it to the gulch. Picturesquely poking out from behind the eucalyptus and palm trees. A tickling sense of love.

The electric green grass draws me in. Beneath the double rainbow. Spiraling deeper through the heart. I round the corner and my jaw drops at a sight so magnificent. I am held in rapture.

Facing the mountain, against a gray back drop, the redwoods and palms are tall through the valley. The rainbows rest in a grove of eucalyptus. Jasmine flowers sweeten the air with romance and softening. The light golden and electrifying. A slate of clouds like curtains sways across the horizon.

The cows roam free and graze. The rainbow stands directly in front of me. It's colors fill my path—like a portal. Stretching across the gulch and dipping into the harbor.

The air grows prismatic. As I walk into the iridescent vapors which create the arcs of beauty. Red melting into orange, saturating with yellow, fusing into green, diffusing to blue, softening in purple.

I sit down—in the grove of eucalyptus. Within the opaline bathe. Seeking sacred union of body, mind, and soul. The goddess watches me, filling me with dawn. She knows the truth of my intentions. Energies are transparent. She calls me to release before I can evolve.

I begin to remove the blockages, like open heart surgery. It seems easy just to exhale with this intention, but it blows me into realms of feeling. I watch the thoughts like clouds until my body dissipates into individual atoms. Buzzing in space, bound by no matter. Like individual molecules of hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon. I am elements, with the potential to become anything.

I dissolve into red, encompassing orange, immersing in yellow, overflowing with green, submerging into blue, and plunging to purple.

I am water vapor, the mist evaporating over the mountain. Collecting in clouds, floating over the landscape. Growing dense and heavy, drops surge into a river. As mighty as the Mississippi, floating through the sky from Hawaii. A Pineapple Express pouring from the atmosphere.

I drop back to earth. Falling fast through the cool wind. Landing upon the redwoods, palm fronds, succulents, and wildflowers. I am liquid calming the earth. I am peace. The owl calls from high in the eucalyptus, “who, who, who, who, are you?”

Consciousness flickering awake. I look up to see the owl's wings spread as she swoops down to a lower branch. White and fuzzy her head moves in all directions, cleansing her feathers with her beak.

A million dandelion wishes float over the mountain. A current carrying the blooms of a new moon. The owl's eyes zoom in like a telescope. She is still, the seer of souls. She focuses upon a single seed pod. She sees the secret wish it holds. The burn of your throat, the gem igniting your soul.

She observes it's soft balance upon the wind—the way it sways lyrically, as if dancing in the air. She zooms out. Her vision refocuses. That single intention is one in a stream of infinity. Dreams ready to root wherever they land. Conceiving a future aligned with love and integrity. A river of prayer floating through the atmosphere.

Growing dense, surging in love. Raining down upon the earth. Droplets fall through the sky catching light and reflecting rainbows. Nourishing our visions. The owl's call beats from deep within the eucalyptus.

The heart has integrated her perspective. Our rhythm is synced. Every molecule of being, flutters with who. When I look inside, I can see the prismatic shimmering. I watch it continually echo through space. If the only container is our perspective, what happens if we break it?

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THE JUSTE
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