

## **Incandescence**

She tapped her gentle feet, seemingly  
gliding across an icy floor.  
Delighted, her eyes shone.  
The kind of shining that inspires  
a whole room to dust off their  
shy bones and prance around.

She sang a tune of triumph,  
rejoicing in melody as if to cleanse  
her weighted sorrows.  
    Lifted, her body soared.  
Her song was a hopeful excursion for  
those once broken—proof that under  
murky shallows lies something else entirely.

    Something of tranquility.

    No more did she have a  
    need for that dying lamp  
    she walked with in fear.

    She beams her own jellyfish-like luminescence.

## Practicing Absolution

Who knew rain could start at 4AM.  
He sleeps starfish-like with me beside him.  
I lie awake practicing:

You are light itself controlling what my reality appears to be.  
When my tongue falters, you paint my body a battlefield  
bloody and all. You stroke Your blue and black bruises on my  
body and say, "I make you beautiful". And i whisper, "i love you".  
My heart is at war with itself. How can i describe this except torturous?  
Your backhand thrusts me into charcoal midnight and i know the  
eclipse is near and i am losing sight as to why i love you.

The rain is weighted, now.  
Still, my tears are never enough to wake him,  
So I practice:

I deserve freedom without a noose.  
I deserve a lover's touch without bruises left behind.

The sun is rising and my time  
to speak up is passing.  
His stretches jolt me awake and  
the rain becomes nothing more  
than morning dew on the window.  
Just as his grabby hands pull me close,  
my salted blank face whispers "I love you".

Who knew bold dreams fold so neatly in locked drawers come sunrise.

## **Bare Bones**

No magic can mend what's left  
—although my mother scrubs our home  
twice a day nothing else to clean but  
that we choose to leave broken.

Nothing is left but the sweet men who hang  
around the corner store on 45th & rampart  
telling stories of my father until sundown  
when the truth of another lost day settles in.

Nothing left to clean but the blue suit bearing  
polka dotted purple from the blood splatter  
spots but my mother reserves the sting of  
bleach for that which she can bear to mourn.

Nothing but our broken bodies are left  
like those we have refused or failed to mend  
—the shattered urn & fragmented plate &  
recessed couch & yes in which he laid &  
ate from & sprawled on—these are the things  
we have failed to or refused to  
mend for what magic can save us when  
we have been reduced to Nothing.

## **A Game for Kings**

The sweet smell of corrupted cigar smoke fills the old black-and-white checkered backroom. Men hang, stealthily sliding game pieces from box to box. When shifted from the decade the game remains the same, suspended in time. Down the dimly lit hallway the women sit, waiting for invitation. The men fuel their addiction with daily matches, obsessing over strategy to control the board as if it's not just a game. They leave knowing the waitlist is long, but that no seat will ever be open.

**Daffodils**

Your eyes remind me of  
fields of daffodils in the winter.  
Their six thin, yellow, wispy  
petals blending into your  
brown and green earthy eyes  
as their trumpet petals play our  
Beginnings when we lay in the  
snow in the middle of Chicago  
as the daffodils bloom  
singing cathartic melodies  
brightly shining their captured  
sunshine-colored flowers  
to the void of winter that attempted  
to freeze them out because  
no one told the daffodils  
that winter was here.  
The daffodils bloom  
around us and for once,  
I see the beauty of  
a dark snowy winter.