

Alpha by Filename 2

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Anatomy

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Anatomy

Men low, women high,
the anatomist's angle—
why men and women differ:
different bits dangle.

For Now

Ours was an awkward friendship spanned
on one end by the beams of joint demand,
the other with a cantilevered bow:
Goodbye for now.

Nagasaki Blues

*irradiate my soul
make me glow
in the dark*

Sear my dusty shadow in the wall
dry and shriveled
dead disheveled
in the acid air

no sickly plastic separation
face of glass
no click encountered safety box
just tattered skin draped
on brittle desiccated bones

invade me invisibly
surround me devour me
split me through each
severed second gripped insanely
half forever gone and
still burning

wind and squirm inside
turn me against myself and bleed
blindly in the dark ambivalence
being gaping lipless screams
desperate scrambling fevered cries
ungoldly brittle eyes
malevolent and wild

return without forever by your side
when morning blooms upon the ashen dust

return without forever by your side
when morning blooms upon the ashen dust

return without for
ever by your side when
without forever by your
ashes bloom and bleed
and bloom and bleed
return without forever blown
to ashes bleed forever blown
and ashes bloom and bleed
and ashes ashes ashes blown to
dust.

leave me waking
skeletal alone
a concrete charcoal etching
where buildings used to be
leave me walking
through ghostly streets
alone in my

but never second best

Toast and Tea (Subtext)

Linen napkins squarely pressed.
An authentic china teapot nicked
around the edges of the lid.
Green vapor and oolong memories.
Prim pinkies rise heaven high
to set cups tinkling on saucers.

Love me, she said,
utterly without reserve
as the leaves land here
blown for perhaps miles,
or as the porch light
flickers a million times
before burning out.

Love me, she said,
the way I love you.

But you don't, I said.
The goose pond freezes
always in this grimy season
and the pool clogs with soggy,
wrinkled leaves.
You always laugh
at the nicotine hipsters
yet your voice doesn't seek
me, just the reassurance
I am still here.

The Cheshire clock twitched its tail
and swung its gaze, wondering
who would speak next.
It grinned.

She tossed her hair,
rebutting with the curve of her neck.
I do not fear loneliness, she said.
I have been alone far too long
and survived without hardening brittle.
I have been fired unremittingly until
clay glows white and glaze shines.
Unlike some I could mention,
I might add, she sniffed.
Please pass the jam.

Many find jade beautiful, I said,
milky green, old, aloof.
But, I rushed before indignation
interrupted, you are still young.
Your pride is your shield
and it blazes meaningless because
you can never put it down.
It coils and thrashes and you dance well,
but tangled puppet string always
slice through the straightening.

The table vase contained, oddly,
a sprig of star thistle.
A butter knife changed hands.

I would go to the ends
of the earth for true love!
she said, but not this
ambivalent banter that drowns
feeling in aimless aphorisms.
Why are you so afraid
to pledge yourself forever?
Until you can, speak not of love.
You do not know its power.

I know I am more than love, I said.
Forever is a long time,
much too long to lie.
I fear no dreams, but sleep
gets old even for kings.
Would you like more tea?

It must be hard, she said,
tapping her high heeled toe,
to get anywhere limping
at the pace of wounded dignity.

I managed myself here, I said,
and can manage myself away.

A finch mistook the patio door
for an open hallway.

Why do I put up with this? she said,
this ignorant, uncanny insistence
on the vapid exorcism of your soul?
Why do I still love you?

Because, I smiled,
you don't.

Summer Fête

A string quartet plays bravely
in a corner of the stuffy room.
Though hushed by broken strings
 and many other broken things
its voiceless melody is slowly mended,
slowly made.

Our hero meets our heroine beneath the shade.

No holy palmer's kiss between the two,
just a friendly, proffered hand.

A cordial nod.

Talk about the weather,
 and the band.

No golden arrow cleaved the heavens
as each looked each in the eye.
Just 'hello'
 and then 'goodbye.'

..

Another night, the same quartet
sits cramped in their accustomed corner
 (the cello always stands, don't forget)
and plays again that voiceless tune
 a time or two, perhaps three.

Our hero meets our heroine again,
 again beneath the tree.

..

Away from the ebb and flow
of stagnant conversations they
 rest awhile.

On an island in the rushing, random surf
within which party-goers go they
 stop to breathe awhile,
To glance around the room awhile

(At guests whose evening met an early end
when their ersatz diamond watches counted ten.
There were loud, outspoken ladies
and self-important men.)

And then,

That first, half self-conscious smile.

..

The clocks strike twelve, into the fairy hours.
Both admirably keep their heads,
 their separate honors.
It may have been time chasing
 down the waxing moon
or the myriad, unspoken, half-acknowledged June.

Perhaps the unassuming ring
from another's deepest heart.

The guests, bound for bed, depart.

..

The string quartet packs up near three,
plays one love song, soft and slow.
Words forgotten not that long ago
float one last time upon a ghostly breeze.

They could never be unspoken.
Were they better left unsaid?

Tat Tvam Asi

*Have you perspicacity
to penetrate opacity,
obviate ennui
and see?*

They sell baguettes in Paris
but not just Paris
and not just baguettes—
little fat men
with sovereignty of bread
Hors d'oeuvres come gratis
but not just gratis
(kind generosity)
each bite leaves
a word unsaid—
The best of life:
if you can lose it
it's not free

Tat tvam asi.

When I Die

When I die
I want a praying mantis grave,
bemused effigy still and dignified
in the noisy December rain.

**Words Inscribed Between Otherwise
Unintelligible Lines on a Tombstone
in a Graveyard Just Outside Monterrey**

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BURIED ALIVE, POOR SOUL
(BY POPULAR REQUEST)
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