

C-Section & four (4) others...4 4 4 others others

By Kira Stevens

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... *I am convinced that the trick to writing engaged and accomplished poetry is to have a placed name as absurd as could be possibly imagined by the givers. So-much-so, that it seems many recognized and revered poets are often only known by their christened initials. (Who the hell is Edward Estlin...? Apparently he said, '...write poetry...it's the only thing that matters.')* Others include: Pelham Grenville, Ronald Revel, Manjo Night, William Somerset, William Robertson; Staples, Lyman, Butler, Rudyard. *Ipsa facto, Kira Stevens' second name must be oh so ludicrous that she has sternly omitted even an initial. See how she follows my rules? She just might be 'the only thing that matters.'* Her style is irreverently rhapsodic, peevish, dyspeptic—the yellow that blackens my bile...but enough of my humorless, gastric, intestinal laxative of fortitude, when we can track such inspired genius. Bitter yet, it's like reading a sold-out standup routine featured at Second City, Caroline's or The Comedy Store—not going to recite a single line, lacking her timing and context...Except: "I had a succulent once named / Kevin." I find there is a fine line between becoming an institution and being institutionalized. Kira should be wary... (Spacing & format is poet's own.)

C-Section

I'm thinking about investing in
a cactus. I want to be a plant
parent. My friends post photos
of their babies every morning
perched by smudgeless windows.
I had a succulent once named
Kevin. I should have known
he wouldn't be safe. My cats

ripped him to shreds. For two weeks
I found bits of Kevin's body
everywhere. Under the couch.
In my sock drawer. Behind the fridge.
I traveled no tunnel
into this world. The doctor pulled me
from my mother's sliced belly
with her insides waiting patiently
to be placed back into their home.
When I'm sad, I play The Sims
in my head and decorate my future
library. I have a giant window
overlooking a field of poppies
I'm not in charge of keeping alive.
My circular desk is surrounded
by bookshelves instead of walls,
and I paint a mural on my ceiling
of Mother Mary with an apple
in her mouth, and the Cheshire Cat
smiling on her shoulders.
I'm already mad at my kids
for sneaking into mommy's room.
They rearranged my carefully customized
disorder and I'm furious. I was born
with a full head of dark brown hair,
blue eyes that never tinted away
from themselves, and lips pursed
kissing the air as if already
contemplating how they were supposed

to move. I used to live in a basement
with no access to the outside world.
I could pretend the clocks upstairs
read whatever hour I felt safest in.
My circadian rhythm forgot its name,
and vitamin D deficiency screamed
randomly when I was asleep.

In Greek Mythology, the map of Hades
is parallel in structure to human female
reproductive anatomy. The birth canal
is a cave through which
heroes have to find themselves.

It's too late for me to go back and retrieve
the hope I left inside the womb.
Pandora's jar was sewn back up.
I wonder what I'll choose to save
upon waking to fire
consuming my bedroom—which portions
of myself I'll shove into these pockets
before light so quickly switches from
dreamscape to daytime. I really wish
I wanted to rest, but I'm afraid
of everything changing behind my closed lids.

In second grade, I caught a wasp
in the corner of my eye, but then it flew
from my view. It was by the window
and then it wasn't—I rolled
my neck into an itch on the base
of my skull, and now the stinger's imprint

infinitely sizzles. The numbers swirl
back from twelve to show their cards
through my curtains' cracks and I am still
not tired. I take out my phone
to pass the time, and scroll through photos
of my friends spraying water
onto soft leaves they nurture
so tenderly. My cats lay with me, and rhythmically
dig their claws into my skin to let me know
it's time for me to feed them breakfast.

Small Talk

My printer's name is Brandon.
He's usually line leading
my List of Favorite Things.

I also have a List
of Unfavorite Things: each item on it
is ranked equal and opposite
to Brandon. Wet bread is the caboose
today and every other Wednesday.

Behind Brandon is a podcast
trapped inside an empty pill bottle. I self soothe
as I consume
concepts like "cosmic connective tissue"
and "luminosity," as they highlight
all of the ways

humans have been wrong
regarding the weight of a star.

Early in the morning
the smell of freshly cut grass
just hits different. My nostrils dig
the chlorophyllic swirls: green phantoms
of beheaded buds. My footprints
in single file follow my father's lead,
as he pushes the lawn mower
to slice a path before us both.

I forgot everybody
is biodegradable for a second.
A terrifying kind of beautiful
is Mother Earth's digestive system.
She's an hourglass
with sticky soil. She flips us up
and around ourselves
like a cyclic sweep: a cold switch bounce
from design to decay
above all the things
we take for granted
until the clock runs out
of space for us.

Zeno probably had sick
running shoes.

I imagine a child

with an identically blind passion
as a moon who snuck too close
to Saturn, and a grin reserved
for marathon runners and mothers.
Icarus broke through
the Roche Limit ribbon
and the Dog Star watched
indifferently.

Fiction is an epidemic
of innocent heels slipping
into Daddys' boots and racing
into blazing nothingness
under the maleficent guise of Fate.

Upon reaching the point at which
Phaethon knows
he's driven into death
the screeches of the chariot's grinding gears
harmonize with his muffled scream.

Hashtag Mood in Four Parts

I am lost in the labyrinth,
the minotaur is blind,
and his nose is stuffed up
so he only hunts me
with his ears
I am cursed
with that tickle in my throat

caused by a cough that desperately
wants to sing for all of
eternity

new coworker says
he's bored, tell him something
I say an octopus
is not the captain
of its tentacles:
each of them
has a mind of its own
he says
okay
and walks away

I like having a clear head and a healthy
body but also it's boring
and simple
and calm
and my anxiety doesn't know
what to focus on
so it's just
slowly becoming an armadillo on vacation
somewhere near a volcano
that's slowly erupting while sending
email updates to its victims
considerately
letting them know
they're all doomed

relatively soon

If Sisyphus is actually
a butterfly, mid fall
I bet he learns about his wings by accident
after bracing for impact,
grabbing his back,
and feeling little roots
budding out of his body
like white flags waving at mirrors
I wonder if he knows
how to rapidly grow
his feathers into full bloom
soon enough in time for him to
fly away and save himself
from all of the weight
he's pushed again
and again before it falls down
and crushes him with all
of his perseverance

Dream Homes

One time, a zebra wearing sunglasses told me to go fuck myself
and objectively speaking, I still think about that incident
way too frequently, especially because
it was like six years ago, and also because it didn't really happen.

I was standing outside of my house that wasn't actually my house,

but it was because my head said so, and I don't get to tell my world
where home is when I'm not looking.

Another time, more recently, a pack of wolves was hunting me
while I was hiding inside a decrepit little cabin I found
and trying desperately to blow out a flame
that was burning in the furnace, because I was afraid of death noticing I was home.

The fire wouldn't stop though, and so my life was forced
to leave itself exposed, and suddenly my heart got hit by the sound of the door
getting broken down and then the howling got closer and closer until I woke up,
and I told Twitter all about it.

My friend I met on the internet told me he read in a dream dictionary
that wolves in my head mean I'm feeling torn down, piece by piece,
and all I can say in response to that is
retweet.

I started thinking about dreams way before I was bombarded by these ones.
The least recent scene resonating in my memory is that of a rhino, wandering
around a backyard that didn't belong to me. I remember shouting
"what are you doing?" and it turned around, looked at me, and stated bluntly
I should mind my own business, but I didn't. I called the police. They did nothing.
I don't know why I found that surprising, and suddenly, this all somehow related to pizza
and the fact that instead of white sauce I ordered red, so none of this is ever going to make sense.

When the lights go out, my head lights up, and a circus parades throughout
my membrane. I am the victim and I am the villain. I wake up and I'm anxious,
and I don't have any reason, other than the fact that the world is scary

and my dreams are safe, even when they're nightmares, because everything
is temporary there.

Tomorrow, if I wake up, the first thing I'll do is make my bed,
and tell the world inside my head I'm not afraid of it today, rather
I'm the damn threat, because I'm going to love everything to death.

This head
this house
this home
is mine,
and I'm going to keep trying to enjoy living in it.

I wanna be included but also my mom had scoliosis

when I'm stuck in limbo I like
to have company to bend

backwards with while waiting

for this empty space to pass over
all of us maybe throw some dark

matter around like food fights

or riots or cosmic mental orgies

I'm picturing a bunch of insides

everywhere like new stains

on old carpets mixing with blunt
ashes rubbing into couch

cushions like vibrations braiding

themselves into genomes the same
way mono lies dormant waits

to pounce onto its next planet infect

everything with humanness call
the waste product a gift nobody

requested we keep calling home

phone numbers of old friends still
memorized for no reason listen

to expired dial tones vacancy

has a vaccine called closure none of us
wants to talk to we keep looking

for faces who never said bye sipping

from strange bottles hoping light is there
at the bottom hiding under messages

we wish somebody had sent before leaving us

here we can't let ourselves stop watching
the boundaries wrapped around everything

that shit tends to stretch without any warning

THE POET SPEAKS: *My interests in psychoanalysis and mythology play major roles in my writing process. As of late, my work has been strongly influenced by Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy, Fernando Pessoa's The Book of Disquiet, and Maggie Nelson's Bluets. Through my poetry I aim to capture the content that drifts between my conscious thoughts—the "noise" in which the needle hides within a silent haystack. My philosophy behind creativity is to waste nothing—I learned to think this way by watching my grandfather eat chicken. Every scrap of paper is useful. Every experience is a piece of a puzzle. The random twists and turns create a universe. Poems are carefully crafted accumulations of the tangential exhaust which spews from a busy cognitive engine. Notice the dualities that naturally escape a wall of purposeful irrationality—the sneaky yin yang sign that always photobombs. I think humans are drawn to art that provokes one's instinctive tendency to seek balance. The eye needs something to want. When inspiration strikes, it is typically because I am not asking it to.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Hi hello greetings my name's Kira. I'm an MFA student at The New School in New York studying creative writing poetry. I think you guys are rad. I'm obsessed with anything involving mythology/philosophy/psychoanalysis/weirdness--and so according to our shared interests I think we should be properly acquainted.

I've attached a PDF of 5 poems for you to consider publishing. You can find more of my work on my website words4food.com



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