

(733) 631 3187 + 3 {three}

(733) 631 3187 + 1 + 1 + 1 = THREE

(733) 631 3187 + 1 + TWO = 3

By Sarah Butkovic

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I am a jealous gourd and 'simultaneous submissions' make me a little uneasy. But we snapped up Sarah Butkovic before she could say yes to the New Yorker...on a 'rolling basis' (whatever that means) out of pure wanton integrity. She has hastily, mistakenly went this-where. Now, she's got Fleas under her belt. Dare to compare: ...enter here and abandon all hope...she has no idea what she's in for 'ash pile of hearts' "and here I am writing about the same thing as before / because my eyes are insatiable creatures" "every eye is now glinting with greed," It only gets better... 'Teenager' is a most beautifully expressed chronology of an adolescent growing up. Read it yourself, it almost makes me wish I was a girl. And who hasn't suddenly remembered the oldest phone number they ever knew by heart '(773) 631-3187,' "i just remembered the landline of my childhood best friend," and longed for them... "yearn crave and desire" Sarah's on fire. (Spacing is poet's own.) HS*

ash pile of hearts

and here I am writing about the same thing as before
because my eyes are insatiable creatures
that devour the heart and leave it exposed,
with nothing to drink except for the
ubiquitous shallows that nourish it cruelly
and keep it emaciated
so that the only words it comes to know
are yearn crave and desire.

A knightess in shining armor

There are wild gasps amongst the audience—
for I have drawn the sword from stone.

A sterling blade whose touch
can draw more blood than a halloween killer
now rests in my hands like a crowning curse.
And every eye is now glinting with greed,
marred with the envy of a mind not for them
but a wit that was destined for me.

I must confess—
a sheath crafted from leather-bound book ends
and a hilt heavy with knowledge
looks rather fine in my fiery grip.

I have never wielded a weapon of intellect,
much less a rapier as deadly as this.
But people are grabbing at me,
reaching for my prize with filthy fingers
and threatening to crack me like an egg on the floor.
So I'm going to say a silent amen
and swing this silver monster of mine through the
empty heads of my enemies.
And when every skull is cracked like a broken pinata,
and the screaming has finally stopped,
I will remember how lucky I am
to be bearing the name of the chosen one.

Teenager

Thirteen was a year of nicked-up knees
and collecting bruises like fruit baskets.
each one a purple plum or ruddy peach
given by disgruntled oaks and thorny fences
on tepid summer eves.

Fourteen was the clutching of blankets
and holding stuffed animals tight.
it was finding out that all along,
disguised by darkness and draping blankets,
the monster under my bed was Adulthood.
Fifteen carved its initials somewhere silent.
abandoned bathroom stalls and lonely corner desks
held the chicken-scratch scribbles
of my mark on the world
before I knew where I fit inside of it.

Sixteen was terrifying.
it was knowing old clothes no longer fit
because I wore myself to skin and bones
and told myself to *shrink shrink shrink*
so that I might just disappear.

Seventeen was eternal springtime,
the aching feeling of verdant freedom
sprouting underneath my ribs
and blooming so large I was
choking up flowers and spitting out seeds.
Innocence surrendered when I was eighteen.
I touched my lips to a burning bottle
and felt the passionate sting
of love for the very first time.

I yearned and was yearned for. It was lovely.
Finally, nineteen emerged
like a phoenix from the ashes of the past.
It shed the soot of teenage strife
and showcased its vibrant new wings
that were itching to finally fly.

(773) 631-3187

it's 3 a.m. and i'm not usually up this late
but i just remembered the landline of my childhood best friend
i heard she's into women now
and sometimes i wish she liked me that way too
but then i remember she taught me to swear like a sailor when we were ten
under the shade of the shriveled oak tree
and whisper to the sky with our tarnished tongues
while summer children played kickball obliviously
so i think for that reason she loved me instead
and isn't that better after all?
when i wake up in the morning i'm going to see this
and have a laugh at my own mawkish wit
but right now it's 3 a.m.
and i just remembered the landline of my childhood best friend

THE POET SPEAKS: *My name is Sarah Butkovic and I'm a 21-year old Loyola graduate student who's been writing before I could walk. Poetry is a genre I started flirting with during COVID--previously only writing fiction and CNF-- that I quickly fell in love with over the course of the pandemic. I initially used it as a tool for expressing my turmoil regarding the state of the world, using quarantine as a way to discover poets like Gwendolyn Brooks, Allen Ginsburg, and Elizabeth Bishop. After reading enough poetry to make my head swell, I tried it out for myself. These poems are a conglomeration of my thoughts, memories, and wild imagination-- I hope you enjoyed reading them!*

AUTHOR BIO: I received my Bachelor's Degree in English from Dominican University this May and I am actively pursuing an MA in English at Loyola University. I have two pieces published in independent magazines (New Contexts and Academy Press) as well as one forthcoming publication in Dominican's literary magazine, Stella Veritatis.

