Mouth Pain Lays with Me and other poems…

By James Croal Jackson

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes… Who? Other than a poet, would write about a toothache rather than have it fixed? Jackson is a dear soul. I only know this because he keeps resubmitting his work; but he remains as good or better than most taken on the fly…still he persists, and a fine candidate for a guest-guessed-ghost poet editor. ‘Surry down to [his] stoned soul picnic’ It’s Jackson…I only write in two dimensions—paper and print… But he doesn’t… “charred remnants / your ghosts live” Don’t dare to miss ‘Love in the Time of Snapchat’ or ‘Autumn’ either…(Spacing and font size are poet’s own.) HS

Mouth Pain Lays with Me

all night
single cell
call vibration
wrapped
under sheet
with me
nightlong
my mouth
voiceless
seasick sleep
that follows
me into
dreams
I drink Coke
with pizza
the bed
swallows me
but I’d eat
the bed
if I could
California Fires

the meteor
from within

the confines of
your neighborhood

charred remnants
your ghosts live

here
in the ashes

the smoky streets
a gasp of oxygen

thickening
Love in the Time of Snapchat

Take a screenshot
(we're temporary).

Name the ghost
our stains.
Snap a story for others
to forget.

When we filter
who we become
we love the fantasy.
Autumn

unsure
of the horizon:

dusk-dried grapes, wine
flowing over cold shores.

Perhaps we trust fall:
bodies unsure of gravity,

landing in arms
constructed mirrors.

Dawn’s waking
is the rite–

summer turns
so restless in sleep.
Elizabeth Fraser

I see men being men on the road to lovemaking
you left me because you're not news every time
in the same time that's how I am when I desire
no one is too thinky
I am still a junky for it I am violin aloneness
I spin I spin to you
you smoosh my love when we are there at the same time
when how it is is the same every time
this one to know us is true
love is meant to be thinking
to know how to flower greater things across the ocean
leaves so white you can’t have me my eyes still have you
this is the tress to thread
love being a river and being with no name
when you're with me inside me
tubes sucking the dream of myself
I hate that I still have me

First Date Triptych

1.
by the window your headlights in the driveway

2.
behind the blinds

3.
from inside this blanket
June 19, 2019 – Shadyside

You sit on a bench on Walnut Street
texting with a boomerang smile the wine
glasses around you cycling out strangers
and I want to ask you for a drink you ask

about my bags of food I’m bringing back
to work and the sky is cerulean your voice

in the cacophony of cars starting stopping
the crowd around us whispering midday

in the sunshine I want to walk free without
work I’d say the first bite this world is yours
Cat Endorphins

Already I am much too careful about the state of Kingsford's joy when I rub his belly in bed.

He purrs, an engine idling midwinter. I do not want him to run out of endorphins–

not expecting you to leave in December
I rushed to the driveway where you had bags

in the trunk. I have come to miss the footsteps that used to populate the hours of our days

together. So I pet him now to make him happy, delay our mutual depression.
Ladder

Asking where the ladder led was stupid you said up to the roof and of course it does. I guess I’m saying we both work at Panera and when thinking about my prospects they are not high because if I were to grab a rung and lift myself up I would probably fall but if I didn’t the locked door at the top means I’d struggle for an unspectacular view.
at the birthday party you and I smush
the cake, pressed up against each other,
open the freezer to spell more vodka

we are the bugs amongst the back
patio chattering, celebrating an
inauthenticity– I am new to the city

and, love, I am

THE POET SPEAKS: I am a little obsessed with the retention of memories. Poetry, for me, serves in the way journaling used to: personal accounts of my life that will always somehow be meaningful for me, and depictions of my life in that moment. In that way, my poems are my skin: flecks of remembrance and perception that have floated off into the river, landing– hopefully– on someone else’s shore.

AUTHOR’S BIO: James Croal Jackson (he/him) is a Filipino-American poet. He has a chapbook, *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017), and poems in *DASH, Capsule Stories, and Ghost City Review*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* (themantlepoetry.com). Currently, he works in film production in Pittsburgh, PA. (jimjakk.com)
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