

# 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 smooch 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

8/31/18

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](http://jimjakk.com))

