



The Pyre
On Which
Tomorrow
Burns

A.J. Huffman

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Publications

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*“And I will look like Death
when last we meet.”*

— *Naomi Replansky*

Swicide Dances

Within the night,
nothing is still.
Nothing is silent.
Except your body.
So close to touch.
It's frightening.
It's frightened.
But only before that moment.
When it learns
that I was meant for the cut
of its teeth.

To Walk Through Streets of Death

This world is not enough.
Not dark enough.
Not deep enough.
To let me see.
Anything
but your shadow.
And I follow it blindly.
Through the maze of mirrors.
Breaking myself
into pieces.
Every time
I forget
you are made of glass.

Initiation

There is some blood
that should only spill
on the grave of the heart.
So perfect.
The veins split precisely.
A ritual.
A rite.
Falling.
In beautiful drops.
Symbols.
Flowers.
Letters.
Heiroglyphs from the past.
Born again
to show the future.
The scars of destiny
that no chisel
could ever erase.

~~Mirror-Drip~~

Anything that might be special
in me
is you.
For I am your tunnel.
Hollow.
You fill me.
With the pieces
of your broken halo.
And the touch
of your tarnished wings.
Feel me flutter.
I am breathing.
Again.
Against you.
In this night.
In this tangle.
As we dangle.
Forever.
Across the sky.

In the Caves of the Moon

Your happiness is contagious.
It's dripping all over my floor.
Like a disease.
But it's too fast to catch.
So it's left.
Festering in the corners.
And I can't stand its breathing.
It's wheezing.
And whining
to reach the sun.
It's lost here.
Like me.
With nothing left to do.
But wait.
To see who will catch
and who will kill.
Who first?

An Alarum at Dawn

I lay with the dead.
I play with the dead.
Because they understand
nothing.
But forgive
everything.
As if they were drops of light
momentarily weakening the darkness.
Or tinier.
Bits of frozen dust.
Shining.
But easily brushed away.
I try to harvest their strength.
I close my eyes.
I close my fists.
But still the only brush stroke
is me.
Broken.
And on my knees.

Panthers in Park

Isn't the muse free?
Of my touch?
Of yours?
Someone needs to be.
Unable to fly in the dark.
We may as well.
Dance.
With death instead.
The effect is the same.
The feeling too.
It's only the weight of the gift
that marks our descent.
Down.
Down.
Lower.
Into the night.

The Modern Procurement of Muses

It was you
who built these strings
from my wrists.
From my back.
And turned me
into a play.
For death.
But now my dancing is not enough.
Not dark enough.
Not deep enough.
For you to seep into.
So you cut my face.
Into a deeper smile.
Frozen.
For the feeling
it scrapes
into your skin.

The Twirling Around My Head

Follow the lines.
What lines?
They all intersect
to nowhere.
Lost in the blue.
Like me.
They bend and break.
And end.
Within steps
of where they start.
Baby steps.
Full of pain and fear.
Still I stumble
and trip my way along.
Piecing a road,
I hope,
to gone.

A Letter from Hell

I never asked you to save me.
Or build me a castle
made of glass.
And now you expect me
to polish your armor.
On my knees?
I am sorry.
You are mistaken.
You have mistaken
me.
For something else.
A dream maybe.
All floating white and gold.
Just waiting for Mr. Right.
But I never wanted to be a princess.
Never wanted my edges curved
and matched to your own.
I don't need a knight.
I don't want a prince.
And horses —

white or not —
are hard on the ass.

In a Dark without Windows

There isn't room in my life
for me.
I have emptied it —
I have emptied myself —
out.
Completely hollow.
To let you breathe.
To let you be.
Free.
In my skin.
A home.
As owned as your own.

A Withered Noon of Axes and Witches

You need more than spiderwebs to hang me.
I have too many fingers.
You cannot keep me all at once.
You pull them off.
Try nailing the pieces.
But it isn't as fun as you think.
My skin is too tough.
It won't stretch to cover the frame.
And so we're stuck.
To each other.
With each other.
Until the dust
finally settles my frame.

A Bed of Silicates

His back was a flame.
A fire.
All orange and gold.
Liquid
moving beneath my touch.
He was alive.
And the scars on my hands
were proof
that I was too.
For a moment.
Only a moment.
As his lips turned my mind.
To smoke.

The Puncture Mark of a Lost Stitch

Her light shows where the patterns end.
And stand.
To stretch
and walk from the night.
Watch her try to catch them.
Tripping over herself,
she may trick a tail or two to stop.
But only for a moment.
They know —
too well —
the needle in her fist
is for more than just the show.

The Dark Side of the Light

I set the frame
without the picture.
That canvas is still waiting
for you.
For your touch.
To focus.
On my skin.
Watch it bleed.
Rainbows for the pressure.
Rainbows for your pleasure.
Though often the mixing is for nothing.
Unless you turn around.
Unless you turn me around.
Or turn me down.
Whatever it takes.
To kill me.
With the flash
of your skin.

Climate of Extremes

You tie my hands
with ecstasy.
Unequaled.
And unanswered.
That's why my words fall
mute.
They cannot reach you
in the dark.
But they spark.
Catching my own skin
with their light.
Still you cannot see.
Still I cannot scream.
As the steam rises.
The only proof.
That innocence, too, can burn
on your stake.

Chewing a Star

I swallowed a mirror
so you couldn't see me.
So I couldn't see me.
And managed, instead,
to bear a child
so heavy
it split me in two.
I shattered at three.
In three
 pieces.
Falling
in time to chimes.
Until there was nothing left.
Nothing but my silver ghost.
Filed sharp.
And ready to carve
 up
your nights.

The Visceral Quality of Meat

Watch the walls.
Are they breathing?
Like us?
Skipping spaces.
Every other smile
is sane.
And the others don't care.
As long as we laugh.
As long as we dance.
To the sound
of their teeth.
Plotting.
To eat our skin.

The Trembling Pulse of God

I am only human.
On the outside.
Inside I am liquid fire.
Blue.
And freezing to your touch.
You call it innocence.
And laugh.
Wading in to your waist.
Then I smile.
And you burn.
Brilliant.
As a captured star.

Carving Body Parts

Just lie quietly
in the dark.
Close your eyes.
Let me breathe for you.
Let me breathe through you.
Relax.
It is only harder as a thought.
I promise.
I'll take your lips first.
Your hands third.
And in between,
well,
anything that pops up
is fair game.

Tantrums in a closet

Door moving.
Without the wind.
Sliding and swinging.
It must be a dream.
My reality
rarely holds this much motion.
And I am frightened.
This is the result
of your touch.
It must be.
See my skin?
It is still sore.
And settling.
From the waves
you break.
Open.
Withholding your smile.

Woman. Bent as a Question Mark.

Here.
Take my heart.
It's a souvenir.
Of pain.
But a memory too.
Of almost forever.
And that has to be worth something.
Feel it.
It's heavy.
Solid.
Okay, it is cracked.
But still in one piece.
It can decorate your wall
or your mantle quite nicely.
All it needs is a nail
or a stake.
To hold it straight.

Reborn Yesterday

I can see you.
Now.
You are the same.
AS me.
On your knees.
Complete with scars.
And a feeling of loss.
I cannot fill it
with any part of me.
Though I try.
My fingers.
My fists.
They only fill me.
You only feel me.
Fading.
From the effort.
Fading.
From the sight.

The Pyre on which Tomorrow Burns

Fit me.
Like a fire
into your fist.
I will bend and shrink.
To make it right.
To make me right
you need to keep me closed.
Away from the air.
Away from the breath —
your breath —
that makes me glow.

Broken

Fissures.
Lined with glitterdust.
Sparkle.
As they fill
with red.
Flood.
Blood.
Pieces too heavy.
To sink.
Just float away.
Dissolving
into drains.
That, thankfully, never learned
to remember.

A Heartless Fire Consuming Itself

You shock me.
Sane.
Like a lightbulb
afraid of the dark.
I cannot burn out.
You cannot burn up.
Even when you find me.
Flashing backwards.
And using up your night.

The Sound of Those without Dreams

I throw myself at you.
Tempting sudden death.
But you stop me.
Always.
From completing my mission.
You prefer to keep me suffering.
Impaled.
And bleeding.
The song of silence.
You need
to help you sleep.

In the Body's Ghetto

Your blood has turned to dust
and clogged your heart.
Now it wants mine.
I can feel it beating my skin.
Fighting my veins.
It wants me
to burn with its fire.
But I cannot.
My hands are too dead.
They cannot manage that kind of light.
They turn back
to you instead.
Burying themselves —
burying me —
in the shallow darkness
of your shadow.

~~Pillowed Like Clouds.~~ ~~Or Torpedoes.~~

The disasters numb within us.
One after two.
They build the glaciers.
The rivers.
And the frozen forests
of our breath.

No.
Don't touch me.
I am too afraid of the fire.
Feel me sweat.
In nothing
but the gaze of your eyes.
That suffering is enough.
To kill.
So why must you always take more?

A Bride for the Gods

You cannot reach heaven
on your knees.
But you can on mine.
See the scars.
I can prove it.
I have proved it.
I have delivered many men.
Up.
On a carpet.
A red carpet.
Colored
with blood they never earned.
But claimed.
Selfishly.
Again and again.
In the force of my will.

~~Streams of Delirium~~

I want to be a shooting star.
Your shooting star.
Will you wish for me?
Or from me?
I'll fire either way.
As long as it's dark enough.
For your eyes.
To stay focused.
On the seams
of my skin.

Disclosed by the Stars and the Silence

Count the tear stains
on the rug
beside my bed.
Count them.
As dreams.
Fallen from my head.
It's okay.
They are the same.
They are the sane
images.
Banished.
From my lips.

Delicacies Dancing Together

The mouth of forever
opened.
And she was happy.
To let him be swallowed . . .

It was so simple.
She just turned away.
In time to the teeth.
Descending
(or so she thought)
from heaven.
And in their wake:
a shower of blood.
To cover her skin.
Her knees.
In a dance.
More refreshing
than any kiss
she had known.

~~Crowded with Dreams~~

You have trapped me.
Like a phone booth
that only calls in.
At random.
Fishing
for an answer.
I don't have.
I never have.
To give.

Eternity in Sickness

You chipped a piece of me away.
Every time you touched me.
Every time you kissed me.
You carved me.
Frozen.
Like a statue
caught in time.
To what?
To nothing.
That is the music you moved me to.
You moved me into your shell.
Knowing I had nowhere to go.
Nowhere to grow.
Nowhere
that wouldn't smother me.
Or color me.
Death.

A Rhinestone Butterfly

She stepped out
of the framing circle
of night.
Right into the center stage
of his eyes.
And he smiled.
And she danced.
Slowly.
She couldn't afford to lose the steps.
They were all that kept her.
From burning alive.

Frightened by Cats and Shadows

The dogs are at the windows.
They're chewing at the knobs.
They don't want to come in.
They only want me
to stay in.
They hate the smell of me.
I contaminate their minds.
Their worlds.
Until the terror
of my smile
is all they need.
To kill.

A Prison for the Mind

I am looking for a candle
that was never lit
in the dark.
I can sense its fire.
The invisible heat.
Longing to be.
Free.
But I step too soon.
I step too close.
And my eyes are melting.
Mixing with the blizzard
of dawn.

The Grace of Animals

We shrink from touching our power.
As we shrink from the windows
trying to force light
into our pitiful skins.
We are afraid
of the colors
it may bring to our eyes.
Reds and golds.
And, of course, the dreams
that always follow those.
They are the most dangerous.
All flesh and teeth.
Teasing.
Teaching.
Reaching.
Through the darkness.
With another light.
Twice as bleak.

Lake of Fire

The custody battle
of our skin
is a flame.
I can feel it —
I can feel you —
burning.
To win.
Though victory implies release.
Which is weak.
But necessary.
To keep the rope tight.
And my blood
running.
Liquid thin.

Not Alone in the Water

It's a suicide line.
This thread.
This silver floss
we draw.
To mark our skin.
Like teeth.
I cross you.
Dropping pieces of me.
To make a pattern.
I want to cut it out.
I want to cut you out.
But I remain.
Unsharpened.
And sinking.
In a pool
of spit.

A Priestess Eager to Initiate

Wake up.
And smell me.
Feel my thorns.
But don't see them.
You might flinch.
And that is too dangerous.
Especially now.
When they are aimed —
so carefully —
at your heart.

~~Sleeping without Dreaming~~

Nothing
is the only truth I know.
The only one
ever given to me.
And I love it.
Its shape.
Its sound.
Its all-consuming space.
So hollow.
It covers me.
Whole.
In an illusion
so solid.
My eyes
may never find the light.

A Suitable Marriage

Stop touching me.
My karma is contagious.
Thick and black.
It sticks to your skin.
Like paste.
You can't scratch it
off.
It eats through your blood and nails.
Smearing your skin.
Searing mine.
Can you hear the smoke?
Our calling.
To kiss.
Or kill.

Dance of the Ice Picks

The dead are never quiet.
They rattle
in the halls of my head.
Bouncing like echoes.
They never stop.
Screaming.
Screaming.
Screaming.
I feed them dreams.
I feed them flowers.
To make them lie
still.
They turn away.
Start pounding instead.
Another torture.
Another torment.
They won't be happy.
Until my blood is flowing.
Beneath their feet.

For One Instant's Agony

I want to staple his hands
and knees
to the floor.
I want him to know
the gravel.
The gravel.
I want him to crawl.
Nowhere.
For nothing.
But the pain
of frustration.
I want his fingers
to bleed.
As mine have.
All over this world
of ignorance.
As it dances.
Us.
Into oblivion.

Ice Ghosts

A wicker peacock
withered by the moon.
This is the image
that floats in your eyes.
Is it me?
Is it you?
Is it true?
I am too light.
I will not hold
against this storm.
Your form is breaking my own.
Picking the edges
until we are tangled.
And stuck.
Plucking our own feathers.
Imaginary.
But just for luck.

In a Rainbow of Breaking Forms

Feel my heart.
Dissolve.
Beneath the touch
of your tongue.
Like a pill.
I am your drug of choice.
All sugar-free.
And loaded.
With liquid liquor.
To send skin shots
flying
through your mind.
Private lightning.
With every bite.

Diamond Horseshoes

Eyes through the stars
sparkle twice.
Before they die.
With a sigh.
What a wish.
What a sight.
To be.
That inside a sun.
For the life
of a blink.

In the Desert of the Real

All the blue flowers open
and I can see my face —
not yours —
in every one.
These children are my misery.
And they are mine alone.
I will not share them with your shadow.
Or your sin.
But I will give you their petals.
One at a time.
To eat.
They need the fire
between your lips.
To grow.

~~the Price of Repression~~

Rewind your kiss.
Pull it.
Back.
From my lips.
Take my tongue too.
I don't need it.
If you don't want it.
I prefer the blood and the blackness.
Of the nothing you have left me.
To give.

Of Eyes Met and Unmeeting

In the mirror I can see
the lights
that refuse to shine.

One.

Two.

Three.

I can hear them.

Pop.

The darkness explodes.

Quickly.

Like a rifle.

Or a balloon.

And I am dying.

With their sound.

Only slower.

And in pieces.

Unconcerned
with the floor.

A World of Fumes and Decibels

You buried me.
Buried my eyes.
In rose petals.
Soft.
But colored in blood.
And they burned.
Headaches rolling.
Nothing seemed to fit.
Until I swallowed.
Two by mistake.
And learned
that breathing and breeding
are twin sides.
Of the noose
you colored.
Gold.
And tied around my fist.

The Bartender of This Rotten Land

Nothing is itself.
Unmatched.
And often unwitnessed.
Standing alone
in the corner
of an unlit room.
Piling the names
of its compatriots.
Then cracking them.
One by one.
Slowly.
Between its teeth.

clockwork of the Moon

It's a shame
to ruin this beautiful darkness.
With anything.
Especially a movement
so subtly conducting the light.
Your body,
catching the stars.
Squeezing them.
Squeezing me.
Burning our life.
Out.
And into
your own.

A Pendulum Kicking the Night

Nothing gets out of here.
Alive.
Or dead.
There is no escape.
The air is a vacuum.
Sucking.
Suffocating.
Like your breath.
It consumes me.
And I am left.
Floating.
Falling.
Freezing.
Lost
among the walls
of this forever.

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“Pillowed Like Clouds. Or Torpedoes.” – *Z-Composition*
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“Dance of the Ice Picks” — *Kalkion*
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About the Author

A.J. Huffman has published twelve full-length poetry collections, thirteen solo poetry chapbooks and one joint poetry chapbook through various small presses. Her most recent releases, *Degeneration* (Pink Girl Ink), *A Bizarre Burning of Bees* (Transcendent Zero Press), and *Familiar Illusions* (Flutter Press) are now available from their respective publishers. She is a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, a two-time Best of Net nominee, and has published over 2500 poems in various national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *The Bookends Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *Corvus Review*, *EgoPHobia*, and *Kritya*. She is also the founding editor of Kind of a Hurricane Press. www.kindofahurricanepress.com.

The Pyre On Which Tomorrow Burns

A.J. Huffman

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