

POETRY BY LINDSAY JOHNSON

2006-7

26 Every Day (For All of Those that are Abused and Forgotten)

1.

Aila with her eyes the color of abalone scrapings and her words more precious than the crumbled backbone of the last rusted leaf of fall

[but more forgotten. The others stand on the frozen place in the shaved corn field and play ball with a blushing red orb that replaces the sun in the a sky scraped raw by one billion crystals of hoarfrost]

Aila with her angry hand-print bruises that thaw like lakes and spread prism-like fingers through the net of blood vessels in her twiggy limbs, watching the bloated ball that is the antithesis of her bruises like an immobile porcelain doll

[but more unwanted. The pale eyes of the others skate only briefly over the crackling bruises before alighting with a small sigh of relief back on the game and the amorphous shapes their living makes from their exhalations that dance on their limited horizons]

Aila with her exposed hands bleeding blackness in every fingertip sinking slowly, without breath, into the snow so blank of comfort, unable to stand on crooked, broken legs, blinking so quickly the world grinds into freeze frames, more monochrome than her hands

[but more broken. The others see the sinking youth below the steam that clouds their vision, but they are focused on the ball that blurs from their mittened hands and lands softly against their fur-lined chests, as if they themselves are a pocket for that concentration of warmth]

Aila, naked body sinking through the snow, turning bluer than the bruises, struggling blindly with the silence, letting the final burst of dewy air frost one last layer of lipstick to consummate the lack of color, heart sticking and finally stopping, engine gutted from the cold that is so pervasive

[but more ignored. The others see her stillness, but the motion of that radiant ball distracts their responsibilities to a more manageable sphere, and in the cold they blind themselves to the tiny corpse and swell like boiling water within their coats. The others know that with time the snow will come with pure white hands to wipe their apprehension and guilt away, leaving only the red bladder in its arc against the sky

2.

Brenda with her eyes the color of glassy coal and her life more precious than the crumbled backbone of the last rusted leaf of fall

[but more forgotten

but more unwanted

but more broken

but more ignored...

STORM

The leaves against the roof are morphine-red;
they drug the season to dizzy numbness.
the green of the summer is wept into by fall;
every trunk is bowing not only to winter
but to death.

photographs of a flaming autumn
are more beautiful than cemetery fog;
heat smiles softly as a pregnant mother
and lays down in a shallow grave
to give birth to her stillborn, crimson child.

not only winter
but death;
not only death
but the end of the rain.

CACAPHONY

In this cacophony
of chaos
the skin of the world
surrounds in its
(laughing children,
dying grandparents,
unceasing life)
resilience
the heart of me.

love exists like this,
as a flower that blooms
when there is no night or day.
the former things are melted.
what is love?
they ask,
love...
love is watching the children cry
and watching your lover hurt them
and loving...
loving...
loving anyway

the flower blooms.
you cannot kill it,
even the night can't close it shut.

THIS IS NOT LIFE

The print of your hand
was a lake on my cheek,
frozen over at the edges but not in the middle.

"This is life," you said.
We stood alone on a landscape of white light.

NO.

This is sanity barricading itself
in a monochrome apartment.
This is clarity struggling to hold off
a technicolor blur.
This is the final battle of reality and chaos,
one small building on a brittle tundra.

This is not life.

SCHOOL DAYS

i've been thinking of the way blood looks on oil-
like a swirling of renaissance angels,
naked, beauty like a white witch in the eves
and ugliness like a girl on the streets,
all of it painted with regret.

i can handle one day of this hurricane

and live without water,
two days from the dehydration of your touch,
but with three comes the pictures that wave on the sand
and i know it's the beginning of the end.

intolerance is rampant and trampling lives
and i am helpless to snare it or stop it.
there is something about happiness and the way
it behaves
that makes me believe
there is more than the end.

SURREAL

It's always raining, and Monday,
when I look in the mirror
and am shocked to realize that I am alive
in the same way as everyone else,
and that a heart beats within me.

The saddest thing is that we existed,
the saddest thing is life.
Most people ignore it but I see it in the shadows,
it grips my lungs like pneumonia,
though I still find it hard to believe
I am subject to the same illnesses
as the ghosts that haunt these streets.
If our lives could be inverted,
I would be comfortable as an apparition.

I wander the town where we grew up.
The men in their business suits smile when
they remember the past,
because they still think memories are real.
I know better.
Happiness is only temporary. In the future
all that is real is that no matter what we felt,
it's gone now.

It's really only surrealism
that makes a town a town, a world a world.
It's really only the screams throughout the years
of events that never occurred.
It's really only me,
breathing,
and my image in the mirror.