

Rachel West's
30 Poems II
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On a line by Brandi Homan

If you still love me, Motherfucker, admit that the size of the universe is more like a color, and that a color is more like a number, and that you are more like a garment that the color wears. Get over yourself. Get over the stench of nothingness that pervades everything. Bear up the banner of contradiction, the scar of it. If you still love me, open your mouth. To the breath that is both still and impossibly rapid, to the poles that are both binary and in degrees.

Lost In My Jewelry Box

where I keep my gifts:
chipped stones & round stones—
my mother—
my aunt—

I fled to the department store
at the end of days
to return the things I have loved.

The sun, agate,
split apart
and was beautiful.

Inspiration

Good day,
blue servility,
honeywise clockwork
of production— True
the world must have its
creamsicles, and yet
I am motivated
by something sharper:
a deliveryman's note—

came by
saw you were busy
will return
time unspecified

A blue cup of coffee
between my hands:
An ocean of self forgiveness.

Our Mirror Neurons Are Turning Us Into Cars

where i work, there are all these little people
with their wallets
full of responsibilities, bodies
clothed in compulsive fibers
that slip and bind
and squeak and smell like metal.

they drive around
in giant heads
that loll imperiously upon the roadways,
unseeing, stern,
ever-forward.

unconsciously i become like them,
frown-browed blind bird of prey
that does not acknowledge what it eats

but when these people
in their massive heads
(perched up too high to hear me)

ask me to repeat myself,
i do, at precisely the same volume,
just to prove they could have heard me
if they'd listened.

what kind of day will i find
digging through sand of sleep
stretched in grey folds of consciousness
that separate to let a dream
drop into the pan and sizzle?
i guess i'm here now.

slid down the bannister
in my pajamas, poom!poom!poom! clouds.
how i hurried to embrace you
as the coffee bubbled
and the bird cried Pretty! to the milky gloom.

Coffee Shop

I guess they turn on Smashmouth
when it gets too crowded.

This coffee, though—
It wouldn't know
if I wrote a song about it.

So where's the harm?

In all the world
butterflies continue to be
abundant.

Blue Uniform

These buildings impose their geometry
on even the floating shadows of the day--

They can move-- but lay like tarpaulins
wherever I set my feet this constant morning

and in their shade it is cold
so I put on my hat.

I am conducting a survey
of downtown parking patterns.

If you asked me, I couldn't say
what this information is for.

I guess that makes me a traitor
because I was motivated by money.

Under the angular shadows
of commerce, I scuttle along,

pausing now and then to write
a poem.

I + can be

difficult, day after day,

to trust the medium to speak

to you Ever - Ever to give

importance to what you ^{might} say ...

You must be somewhat practiced

by now - unless

you've ^{only} learned to see yourself

as a trainable curiosity,

your words as raw rough things

to be refined

until they are worth money ...

Planting Seeds

Last year the egg cartons
didn't work. I have trouble
sprouting seeds.

Maybe it's my own self doubt I pour
into their beds
and they believe me

more than themselves,
more than their natural
machine-like infallibility.

Yet here I am
with everything I want.

Can't the plants
sense that?

Have I soaked up too much sunshine,
given back too little?

Another example
of too much power over my reality:

do I have to decide
something so fundamental?

My tomatoes won't grow
until I believe in them.

Compared to that,
cold, hard causality
begins to feel like grace.

Intoxication

Out on the stoop in full sun, we waited
possibly a full minute
for dude to lean off his horn.

It's Spring and nothing that happens in or around a car is private now.

It's Spring and the basketballs
are hatching.

Some days I am old man winter, already dead,
still resisting.

Today I am wearing a tight dress and walking around
with my arms above my head.

Dimensions

I woke up
red, of course,
in green sheets,

jungle-sky
in my hair.

I can't hurry today.

It's the Spring game,
and I am intersecting
dimensions
as I walk,
wavering side to side.

Wedding bells again--
I know those girls
in their jade-colored dresses,

so I try to hear
only the bells,
to stay in that place,
stay away from the sound of cars,
away
from the red smoke.

Preparing For A Journey

Everything is an impediment.

No jewels.

No receipts.

No projects.

The faulty landscape
atop my shoulders
is embarrassing enough.

Just maneuvering my mental state
into that car and saying

sorry

sorry

I know

I tried

to pack light...

Luggage

heavy bag of books

heavy bag of eyes
and clouds

heavy bag of birds
and dogs
and hearts

Apple Space

Table-land
and mountain-land.

Budding trees,
red buds,
yellow dogs.

Open book.
Oxygen.
Possibilities Office.

Grit barn. Pole barn.
Hyacinth.

The music
of the oxygen tank
at night
gives me nervous
collegiate dreams—

playing Eels on the radio

searching
for unlocked doors
to the music school.

We're Out In The Country
(for Mom's birthday)

We're out in the country
listening to birds
imitate machine guns — pew pew pew

and cows
imitate tootling woodwinds

and little golden flies
imitate little golden Kawasakis
sizzling through the night.

Maybe all these sounds
came here with me
and never existed til I looked for them.

Maybe when I go home
I'll just hear
singing
and sighing
or nothing at all,

nature having claimed
my ears
for silence.

Leaving

So much has happened.
I've been intersected
with birdsong
and the body's defeats.

I've seen
a catalogue of roses
and felt softness
unfolding its vitality,
merging colors and washing ideas away.

I want to be
the same lightning
as every other essential fretful thing,
finally swept into
the motion of mercy.

All this beneath
a Missouri sunset

not quite ancestral
but broad enough
to contain us all.

Arriving

When I came home you were
chatting with Peter on the step.

I was so happy to see you

even though
a stranger had just
puked Four Loko on my shoe.

The Fire Ritual Of Now

The wild courtship dance
where life and death are indistinguishable
in their seduction—

Cranes at sunset,
darkened theaters,
the mind's conflagrations—

Each moment,
opening my eyes,
I invoke the name.

Sap,
blood,
magisterial clouds
in their velvet.

The gods are faithful.
The world, obedient,
is manifest again.

upstairs

my name's clemence.
i've come about the position.

i just want to post deadpan shit to facebook.
for absent friends. and i'm drinking this wine.
any second i could lapse back into the
distractable dream. i wonder. well this is how.
i'm way ahead of you.

i'm watching tv, this lady with fancy sleeves.
apparently i've never been a servant, never
had a presumptuous name.

Exorcism Lemonade

You don't have to do anything.
Folded under like cartwheeled death pods
in the yard— What is that music?

White light, blue light,
immense reflective quality of paper—
I'm blinded in this attempt.

Turning, I find
my body
is a structure I can shelter in.

My shadow becomes my office,
with desk and chair and view,
all of highest quality.

I have coffee brought in,
or, if I am feeling very hospitable,
lemonade.

The Poet attempts to contact mission control

Time to find a quiet spot
and place a call.
I've got to make a report
on the eight things I've learned.

1.) Logic fits the comparison
of my body to its emotional origin.

2.) I can reach any goal
no matter how small
with steps and leaps so broad
I overshoot and end up
lost again.

3.) (these are my coordinates.
please send assistance.)

4.) Radio stations here
provide dental health advice
but I know all the teeth in my head.
They are not obscure.

5.) My mother
has wi fi access now
whereas when I was gestating
I was completely isolated.

6.) You can smoke
apples
and coffee
and experience no high whatsoever.

7.) It is possible to fear anything.

8.) I know I was sent here
for a training exercise.

I'm beginning to feel
like it's gotten out of hand.

I've been making my own maps
in the persistent darkness.

So is that enough?
Can I come home now?

the books that have become part of my family are due
back.

i move a seed.
i roll over in bed.
i grope for a doorway in.
the walls are white and black.
i considered buying something.
i tried to think of all the things unsaid.
like gospel.

the books that have become
part of my family
are due back.
the basement is filled with their appointments
and something else
is overcoming them.
it's something i allow to happen.

i said a prayer over the coffee.
i wonder if this plant sends out shoots
because it is dying.

Five Minutes

We walked in the sun, reminiscing about the time we got the deep freeze and that copy of UHF.

I just wanted to acknowledge small celebrations.

where was I all day?
yellow roses covered my eyes
and filled my mouth
like a gas.
I had to cry,
and sleep,
and drink,
as if I could prevail
by conscious intervention
into the thousand-sound.

The Insult

And so my life,
great captain,
goes out to sea
on that boat

After all we'd hoped
After all those fine dresses

Here I stand
waving farewell
from here nor there
ship nor land

<http://news.yahoo.com/minimum-wage-approaches-likely>

push parade, buried,
propels November.

expired curbs,
all of them tripped up,
widely poised
to join the shy stance.

final passage.

fate-lure is powerful,
focal. measure.
rise.

Balloons

The bird's sound
is inflationary, rising and drop-shaped.
I am rising into it,
from the string in the center of my ribcage.
The string is a wound white cord
that sings as it is drawn between the fingers.
Sunny is one of many cockatiels residing in Lincoln, Nebraska;
cockatiels are not indigenous
but they are natural.
I am actually completely isolated below
the level of his song; pooling.
Evaporating. A true sailor's delight.
And as a result the yellowfeather
is a fella. The yellow pear of Heaven.
The weighted bird with his little claw
on the switch of a dynamite box. Oh high-squeak falling-squeak,
won't you appease him? You will.
With the seven-fold pear. He is happy that you
got that job somewhere muy tropicale.
You can go there in a balloon.

Susan's Porch

The first and last time I saw the stars
was on Susan's porch.
Maybe I'd never been afraid

til then, til I came up
against that endless air
so close to what was once familiar.

Then the dogs
came running out into the night,

jingles, teeth and fur
our welcome home.