Short Time
Enjambment
November the Second
The Death of a Revolutionary Friend

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Short Time

I am haunted by the sadness of men
hanging out at night
in all the parks and alleys of the world.
They wait and meander
weighing
measuring
the safer distance
between dread
and desire.
Every face a catalog of possibilities,
every look a whole vocabulary of need.

Tonight, you are the dream
who walks in my waking sleep,
who bears miraculously
the shape voice motion of remembered love.
How can I resist the reckless

Leap from the world
of furtive bushes and tunnelling headlights
to this room, no less anonymous,
of thin walls, thinning mattresses
where we grapple and thrash
like beached sea creatures
breathing the dry unfamiliar air?

When you stand to go, I ease myself
into the hollow your body leaves.
I press the faint smell of you to my face.
O Christ, were I loving you
drinking your blood, eating your flesh!

But the morning betrays nothing.
The chair in the corner stands mute,
the mirror repeats your absence.
When the curtains are flung back
to let the harsh light in,
the bed looms empty.

I am finally all I have.

**Enjambment**

who  
will  
rock the waves  
bend  
the rainbow shape  
the quail's  
egg who  
w nibble  
the moon  
fill  
the peach  
stone shut if  
you  
go love  
who will  
pillow  
my thoughts color  
my skin milk  
my arching  
swollen  
body when  
you go love  
who  
will stoke the dark  
fire  
between my legs
November the Second

Another year given and gone.
I've come through, safe from this one more time
From screeching tire and bloodied knife
To stand before your silent grave.
The day is warmer than I thought,
It burns a pathway through the haze
Of a thousand bird-filled mornings
That would never touch your eyes.

Three years, and I still wonder
If this is all there is. Finally. For us.
For all our solemn vows of love
And deathlessness and hope. This mound
Of dirt slowly leveling to the ground,
This slab of stone that claims your crumbling name.

Once, in jest, you promised you'd come back
To tell me whether heaven or hell
Truly lay on the other side. Weeks afterwards
I waited for a sign, some phosphorescence
Gathering in the dark to take
The shape of body, hands, and flowing hair.
You never did.

How can this silence, words folded into stone,
Be all there is. I cannot, my wife, my love,
Cannot bear the thought: The unkind
Words I could never take back and make right
The stupid wrongs I did out of ignorance
Or pride, when you were alive.
If I could believe your silence
Is a way of bestowing forgiveness, I might
Learn to let go at last, be at peace
As the trees are at peace, content
To stand in one root-locked place and accept
What the sky gives or withholds.

To cup in memory's hands your face
Growing softer and dimmer with the years . . .
In the air, the pungent smell of melting wax.
Gladioli and mums already mottling,
Like mortal flesh, in the morning heat.
Rank weeds shimmer in watery light.
I fall on my knee. I bow my head.
I do as lovers will, in mourning's dishevelment:
With bare hands, I tug and tear and pull
The encroaching weeds from your grave.

The Death of a Revolutionary Friend
—for E.R.

once your eyes were fresh mornings
wide open to new beginnings
your face a mountain stream so
transparent we could see every least bit
of cloud troubling your sorrow's sky
for you hoarded sorrow easily the way
the spaces beneath the bed collect
loose change dust fallen hair
the sad debris of our desperate lives
you cried mothering the pot-bellied child
in Cotabato you raged hearing
the massacre of the villagers in Jolo
you grieved over the ineptitude
the thieving in high places
and all week long a grey rain fell
your love we know now was as ruthless
and as reckless as your anger and hope
you left the corrupted city for the mountain
because you could not bear to see us shrivel
because you loved too much
because you dared to shape the world anew
but to whose heart's desire
what you could not touch with gentle words
you would challenge with fire bullet and scourge
and we were left to tend the dying garden
to nurse the maimed to bury the salvaged dead
now the mountain is giving you back
you lie in a felled tree
that cradles your stillborn dream
the east my friend is not red
and we move in endless circles of grief
like the iron bars that enclose the grass
that encloses the hunchbacked house
of the living that hems us in
over and over and over again
a broken song holding the stubborn fact
of your dream’s implacable death

FATIMA LIM-WILSON

Alphabet Soup
(Mimicry as a Second Language)

Angel of letters, feed me.
Beat your wings till I remember
Cardboard cut-outs of ABC’s. Why
Does my memory hobble, lift
Empty pails from an English castle’s dark well?
Fill me with the welter of vowels,
Googol of consonants, tender French
Hearts, dead Latin roots from where words grow,
Insidiously. My tongue smokes, a
Joss stick trailing mixed signals. What
Keeps me from balancing a silver spoon
Locked in my mouth? An echo.
Mother humming her made-up melodies. She
Nudges me to move my lips with hers.
Old wives rustle, whisper tales in my ears.
Palimpsest of longtailed syllables,
Quick darting wings of a windseeking accent.
Run, I must rend the tent of Thesaurus.
Slash away till I warble, silvery voiced with a cut
Tongue. I grow, a hunchback, trailing my master,
Unctuous and anxious. Sweet, mute angel, cast your
Veil over me to muffle my voice of broken glass.