



Open Head Injury

Out on the balcony, our petty domestics
conducted open air, the marital stamps and yells
public. We enthralled sidewalk spectators;
I didn't care who heard. Hatred's throttled urge
clenched my fists; I took a step towards you,
then turned and stalked to the stairwell.
Now my memory blurs.
Did you mean to seize my arm, whisper
Don't go at decibels too low to hear?
I'm unsure. I remember a push; off-balance,
I hurtled through the wooden railing. Just two
seconds before I made my splash
of blood at high pitch in the ears:
din increased until the horizontal,
flinching ballet of seizure.
My throat gurgled and choked,
ballistic limbs beating to an electrocuted song.
Vision was a spattered easel of stars.
A grimace spread across my face,
tremors built to furious swats and kicks.
I leaked out from a hole.

Sense reasserted: I saw a small, unrecoverable beauty
that overwhelmed the waking world-
your face a small blot, the sound of steps
rushing down the stairs, bystanders close.

Ambulance Delirium: Dream Procedure

The brittle sarcophagus: a battered
brain in its bone-cage, light leaking
in from a puncture. The head made
open air- I felt a hot poker tapping
at my temple; no, a warm wet bandage
applied to keep things in. The driver braked
with a metallic screech wrenched
into a thousand songs, the symphonic whimper
of a broken hinge. After this sound,
a crack-

another piece broken off. Hands
touched the wound: *depressed skull fracture*
a paramedic said. Head-first, I hit concrete;
ferocious light now singses my cortex.

Was it aura?

I reached for pockets of air, kicked ether
underneath the halothanes. I couldn't resist;
cerebral plate tectonics bid me to seize,
and seize I did. The ambulance speeded past
a crosswalk shining its binaries, ushering me
into minutes of striking. The broken sarcophagus
permits no freedom from the dream procedure.
Inside my old contraption has collapsed,
its worn-out cogs smashed- and I lash
in restraints, tongue bloodied and clogging
my throat.

Why think of you then?

I was almost dead, and it's said
we should go without regret. Last words
should be poetic- I've seen films where
heroes gasp tender soliloquies between breaths.
Thwarted by talk, all I could do was think
and forgive.

Bedside Delirium: Family Visit*

-for my Father

Dreaming of origins: building the house
at age ten, lumber in heaps and men idle
until my father commands them to erect
a cross-beam. *Make it level, edge in*
he says. A simple bungalow, frame open
to the elements. The blueprints
pure suburb: in this identical neighborhood,
our house will fit in.

A week's work later and the roof's up.
I'm underneath, sweeping sawdust.
A cross-beam yawns and cracks
at its ends, then buckles and breaks
at the centre. The world splinters.

On the hospital bed the weakness spreads.
Am I ten again? I writhe according
to a disordered brain. I hear them:

basal skull fracture

Faces blot my sky,
try to rouse me from the downed epileptic.
I see my father's face
drawn tight in an ancient posture:
that old look of dread
I haven't seen since
I was a kid.

In a flailed construction
I fix on his eyes,
place a level upon the world.

Phenytoin to Stop The Seizure*

Pharmaceuticals infuse into my arm.
A hanging bag drips drugs down
plastic tubing to nourish skittish shores
of braincell. The brain's fault lines settle
until the tectonic pressure's too much

and the dream procedure begins:
plates wriggle and shift,
try to form new structures that fit
with the world not as it was,
but *how it is*: in constant drift,
beckoning to the epileptic:

mimic me, mimic

the crush and bust of frantic axons,
the spinal cord a plucked bow.
Brainstuffs leak out a hole
as aura's strobe lights flash.
The effect: quaking consciousness,
five vigorous minutes of wriggle.

Realigned, the jagged edges of the world
make tectonic threats. Between bleary combats I emerge
to periods of fitful rest, I hear
nurses whisper:
surgery emergency

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