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by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Sleepwalk with Me

Here ripples cherry on violet sky
Fluid as the soup of space and time.
Observer trying not to choose sides
Between clinging sun, invading moon.

Heliotrope will replace lilies
By this house new owners paint chartreuse.
The bent cobalt willow will be struck
By lightening, moan all its crippled life.

All of these windows will be stained glass.
Stone lions to guard the lancet door,
Chess figurines, ivory and jade,
A claw-footed couch in black eel-skin.

Darling, it's too much to understand
How this world fractures, what I will be.
Let's call what falls between us a dream.
Bring your old plaid robe, sleepwalk with me

The Wolves of Mars

Tungsten key in my platinum door, you shiver,
In scant light of Bellatrix through terra-palms.
I lift an empty goblet to my lips,
Rake a hand through my helmet-flattened hair.

You've come with Plan B's scrawled on scrubbed flight plans,
You have my final navigation on computer,
Play my hazardous landing over again
Trying to catch fear. It's never there.

Don't suffocate, float to the hexagon window.
Watch the dance of terrestrial silhouettes.
I sway in your arms, abandoned star
Until I feel your heart has stopped knocking.

Your irises are flecked robin's egg blue.
Your runaway dog is razor grey,
And other crumbs of our old world I hold onto...
Melt down this damn key and forge a silver bullet

Which ends even the loneliness of werewolves
And wives terraforming Mars into Edens.
Without permission.

One-Way Trip

He avoids my poems like the plague,
Does not wish to spy himself through me.
He refused to come to launch simulations,
He says I am in denial, in need of counsel.
They are giving us time off now.
Our training is complete.
Countdown clocks glow on billboards, on T.V.

I rouse him to check out a noise in my head.
He stalks the labyrinth of our house with a gun.
He shoots between my memories of platonica
And blood-lust,
Is disarmed by the cradle
Of my trembling legs.

We wake. I don't even need a suitcase.
He is hypnotized by tamarisk tea.
Perfunctory kiss at the cherry door.
He knows I know he knows.
Polite nod from my military escort.
He sees I see he sees.



Anesthesia

by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Mirror World

Do I yearn for the lost world of you?

Only when

The piano punches a flat tone

Which hints at apology,

But evokes silence.

Only when I cannot avoid myself

Between drowning the cactus

And starving the violets.

What happens in the hothouse?

I can only say,

Orchids have faith in such tenderness,

I must turn away.



**Katniss in Lake of Fire
by Rebecca Lu Kiernan**

Reflection

In my gold opera cape pocket
Twitches an egg-scented, dog-faced bat,
His once sharp shriek, an agonized growl,
Undignified, sing-songy long vowel.
Half-eaten butterscotch
Glues shut one sunken eye.
Mold has brazenly begun to grow
On claws that coaxed avalanche from scant snow.
He is deaf, he is blind,
Not the prince that haunts my mind.
I'm a kind soul, ooh, I swear.
I forgot I trapped him there.
I'll hang him from the chandelier
Upside-down with a garbage tie,
Feed him field mice and icy rain,
That he might rise to say goodbye.
Closure, I didn't get it.
The Bite? I don't regret it.
Revenge? I'm quite above it.
Creature? How could I love it?
Lost prince can't soar, he can't walk.
Breath so labored, he can't talk.
He flips in circles like a toy,
A broken one I can't destroy,
For I was lost, he made me laugh,
An empty space in mirror and photograph.



Nymph of Hemlock and Cherry

By Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Spells of the Chameleon

One hand to save your place in Pushkin,
(Limited edition antiquarian leather)
One hand brushing my hair behind my ear
(Pear-hyacinth scent rising from my neck)
Leaves you no appendage for self-defense
Against the whips and chains
Of my advances,
Leads me to believe
You have no survival skills,
Puts your virtue at my mercurial mercy.
The security tapes have caught you seven months
Plundering through my house
While I was on Mars,
Fumbling through my cherry wood drawers of lingerie,
Crimson leathers, black laces,
Amish pink, cotton florals.
What a chameleon a woman must be
To convince a man
By happenstance, he has stumbled
Into his fantasy.
Thank you for folding things
So obsessively.
Do you ever wonder why that window is unlocked?
I could take you as my mistress,
Set you up in a cottage by the sea
Decorated in shipwreck-theme.
What fresh hell you would find that to be.
Your book is on the floor.
My hair likes to fall in my face.
How long can this sham of civility stand?
Ah, you have already lost your place.
Find the line where you left off,
Read softly to me
How women are at the mercy of men.



Uncharted Worlds
by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Love and Other Poisonings

If I were you, I would surrender to me
The way a starling breaks from its brethren V.
Having seen something glitter in the bog birch.
Slow-feathered, zig-zaggy glide,
Overworked heart
Slicing a Payne's grey, titanium white sky
Hot-breasted, twitch-winged,
Snapping petal from bark.
Shake my branches, leave claw-marks,
Forget you can fly.

If I were you, I could love me,
A burst of light in a bent tree,
A taste of unstrained, violet-streaked honey
Betwixt vampire-orchid, goat-root, killer bee.



My Love is Nothing Like the Sun

By Rebecca Lu Kiernan

The Melting Pot

Dare you ring the tungsten bell and blink away
To the lost world's spark in the plum-grey sky.

Dare you melt the tantalum we mined on Mars.
Into a necklace in the shape of a heartleaf vine.

What fuel fed the flame to 5463?

I speak fahrenheit, you say celsius.
What alien conversion will marry us?
Our imposturous spy coats are useless.

What amaranth and wolf-kiss orchids have you brought
To wilt my novice faith at the melting pot?



Stalking my Doppelganger

by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

The War Room

One last kiss you taste
Like arrowroot, clove,
Apricot and fire,
Militant calm disaster.
Nuclear launch codes are confirmed.
Our keys are inserted.
Could I shoot you and end this outcome?
Elsewhen that variation has unfurled.
I wish the asteroid would come sooner
To erase us.
Blessed be that this event
Be not trembling between our fingers.
Perhaps the key to my destruction
Is not also the key to yours.
What a clever fail-safe that would be!
You could shoot me.
But there is someone in line
To turn your key and mine.
Our posts are too far apart to kiss.
The designer thought of this!
I knew it would end up this way,
The day after the interrogation
And psychological tests,
You asked, cradling a brandy glass,
"Could you really do it?"
I sighed,
Sprinkling blueberries into pancake batter,
"It is not my job to think."
We kissed, we cried, we did not blink.

You hand over
Your only key to our home.
How is it possible our fingers do not touch?
You stumble past me
Bumping the buttercream walls
With your bullet-proof suitcases,
Opening our hyacinth-wreathed door,
Zig-zagging into nuclear winter
Without negotiation, a coat, a splinter.



Arrows of Time

by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

The Safe House

This house of lunar rock and willow bark
Sounds like trap-wounded wolfsong in the dark,
Tastes like unfiltered hornet honey,
Smells like burnt leaves, counterfeit money.

This house of mood-stone floor and stained glass
Says footprints fade and sharp grudges pass.
Is love a chess game, minefield, trapeze, a tether?
Have you a jacket for apocalypse weather?



Timewave Music
by Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Glaciers Come Slowly?

A silence, a bird being crushed
From the clairvoyant violet sky.
The mind breaks the body awake
From a falling dream.

Numb kiss, grey breath, swollen fingers
Shake years of snow
From the lover's imposterous plaid coat.

Glaciers come slowly?

What invites an Age of Ice?
The ash of a nuclear holocaust?
Asteroid with non-negotiable math?

Less and less information,
You will find
Can be harbored
In the crooked wires of the mind
As systems, sputtering with denial
Are shutting down.
What is misplaced?
A map of Qatar, key to the safe-house,
A dead dog's collar.

Glaciers come slowly?

Phone a friend.
A computer says all systems are frozen.

Glaciers come in the sting-blink of an eye!
Our life together
Has always been painted
With its temperature.

Now the panic of attempting to open
An ice-welded door.

A silence,

A bird being crushed from the sky.
If we could bend time
Would we put on Claire De Lune
To fill the void?
Rearrange the sky
To make room
For the rumors we heard?

What would You do
To undisaster a world?
Uncrush a bird?

Post Scriptum

7 Signs You Might Be a Poet's Muse

You exist because I scrimshaw your name
Into the blast-fractured Chokeberry tree
With a wolf's fang,
And program my robots
To dispose of the poison sap
Before it bleeds
Into our conversant garden
Of snowdragon, shamrock, amaranth.

You return safely to Earth
Because I scratch out alien stars
And rearrange them,
Bend the complicit fabric
Of space and time
With an arrogant smile
When you spin
Galaxies offcourse.

You love because I leave shark teeth,
Volcano ash, nuclear launch codes
Under your tie-dyed pillow.

You are an addict
Because you are at risk
Of becoming poetry
Every time you are inside me.

You feel cuckolded by every word I wrote before we met.

You survive because I deflect the asteroid
With the muscles of my tongue,
Unravel the war with an untranslatable whisper,
In the angelic octave that entrances

Gladiator,
Thief,
Vampire,
Wolf.

You are sorry
You tore my red fishnet stocking
With your teeth,
Fainted when you came,
Concussed yourself on the ceiling fan
And were so artfully framed,
You woke up on Death Row
For drowning a mermaid.

What alibi am I?

What tamarisk tea
Will crush your immortal regret?
A day without a thought of me?
It hasn't happened yet!

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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

Submission and comments should be sent to Klaus Gerken, Chief Editor at kgerken@synapse.net

Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.