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Four Poems

by Dan Leach

Something Short

You can cut it off next summer
when some clever girl with bangs
swishes past our picnic,
and your nape can know the kiss
of those famous nine-thirty breezes
that go waltzing on down Main
in back-end of September.

And standing on the sidewalk
clutching coffee in our hands
you'll no doubt steal a wink
as some bright-eyed passing stranger
stops you just to say:
"I like what you have done."

But give a boy one winter
to wake in pre-dawn blue
and catch the moon's last song
as it spills across your curls
still wrapped around my fingers
from when I fell asleep.
Please.

Ceasefire

We never escape the war
with the things we think we own.
As soon as you make peace
with the temperamental engine,
you will no doubt discover
sabotage stirring fresh
in a tiny plastic button
you once considered innocent.

The sole red sock
lying lonely in the dryer
will forever mock your awe
as his brother tumbles down
some underground railroad
nobody will ever discover.

The crooked hanging frames

Editor's Note

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will shake with silent laughter
as the pearl-white carpet catches
a fallen plate of spaghetti
and another helpless sigh.

Every day a brand new battle:
stubborn screws and tangled cords,
loose knobs and shrunken shirts,
the corner that nicks your shin,
and the couch that steals your keys.

But once in a while, a ceasefire settles,
a brass lamp's light falls tender
and a pillow holds your neck
as you settle into the evening
with a old, familiar book
that falls open right to your page.

A Long Winter

Maybe Spring will come,
and you could smile again,
for a Carolina sunset
dripping down the branches
of your mother's favorite dogwood-
the one you used to climb
when your heart was full of searchin'
and joy didn't hide so well.

Deaf

The song of sirens wakes you
from a hung-low hammock nap.
The trees are dripping with sunlight,
your lips still taste of lemonade,
and the breezeless air hangs heavy
with the buzz of honey-bees,
much as it did when you nodded off.
Even the gold-flecked leaf
that floated down onto your stomach
hasn't budged in hours.

The sirens sing a louder song
as your groggy fingers grope
in search of a protagonist
that you left stranded
on the dog-eared page
of a just-dropped book.
You snatch the volume up
and stretch out like a tabby
before settling your sleepy eyes

once more on sun-lit scribbles.

The sirens sing outside your house
and only now do you wonder
towards what tragedy they race.
Only now does it occur to you
that somebody's Saturday is broken.
Fire-truck? Or ambulance?
You attempt an interpretation,
but an untouched string of Saturdays
has rendered you nearly deaf
to the varied keys of suffering.

The sirens sing a fading tune.
Still, you decide to fashion a prayer,
to mumble some thoughtful words
for an unseen burning home
or a man you'll never meet
dying in the back of an ambulance.
So you shut your eyes
and wait for something real,
but you quickly fall asleep
as the sound of sirens dies.

When you wake,
the world is as you left it
and you will no doubt smile
to find the sun still shining
and the protagonist still waiting.
That you have slept through the suffering
of a neighbor is forgivable.
After all, a man can't unravel
every time some stranger dies.
The world's too wrecked for that.

Just know this:
There will come a day
when the sirens sing for you.
And somewhere across town
someone whom you adore
will stir from an afternoon nap
just long enough to yawn
and utter some half-hearted prayer
for a nameless, faceless stranger
whose suffering is soon forgotten.

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