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THREE POEMS BY MARK DECARTERET

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Back When Again

Though outlasting the morning
the fog is now hoisted away
exposing some ocean, this spectacle of sun.
Through mounds of fatigued grass and seaweed,
oysters shellacked with both a broth and a grime
you poke the rubber stopper of your cane
while a glaucous gull whines pathetically--
air Heimlich-maneuvered out its throat.
In the rubble, broken glass has been mishandled
into stone, clouds preserved in each center;
after brushing an anesthetized fly
off the outdated map of your face
you begin returning the treasure back to the sand,
a period accompanied by the grind of your thrust.

Passing by these shimmering bodies
unconcerned with your miscues and stats
you reenact this most complicated of shuffles--
your shallow prints taking in water,
the eyes baffled with solder--
a mixture of bother and dim recollection
disguised behind lenses of medicinal green.
A pause in your unspoken sentence, you linger--
each movement uncharted, each stunted discovery
dissolving into vapor, these temporal convergences,
before returning to the rental, your scantest of scents.
In a night depleted of legends, even shivery outposts
what few stars that advance into blackness
are immediately regarded as suspect,
dragged off into night for more questioning.

A hurricane from a year of no matter
with a name of no significance, once restored
this stretch of houses into blueprints again--
dream figures absorbed by the earth
and then flattened against the sky.
Now any stimulation, rise in pressure
is restricted to your mind, its capricious revolutions,
as you rock in your riveted chair
imagining visitors at doorways, on horizons,
invoking the windows to be shattered,

suck this monotony from the room.

Instead it's a shoelace you've missed,
pants hampered with surf, pissy foam
urging you closer towards shadow, stillest pool
where you fracture a hip or a collarbone,
introduce an unchivalrous twinge--
this pull on the jawbone or chest,
your body now an estuary, all binges and bends,
depreciating the diets and walking shoes,
the emergency cigarettes in the end table.

Useless are the dues and subscriptions,
the interchangeable talk of professionals,
only your prescriptions, their illegible spells
helping thin the uncertainty, quell the deep,
let you slip further beneath that luminous pain
and drain your limbs of the phantoms' reach;
after positing the third capsule under your tongue
you clamp your eyes into dashes, muscles fluttering,
waiting to be cleared of this mysterious tug-
a rewiring of that familiar persistence,
until sputtering contentedly to a halt
you're at peace in memory that is breath.

Peninsula (From a DC-10)

What he wouldn't surrender
to better comprehend the scant
geometry of down below--
to find fit what he can't when he's
part of it, contained in its plight,
the discontent of this continent.
His face, force-fed with oxygen,
no longer the usual site of allegations
sectioned off with orange tape
bitten clean through by some god.
How he'd pick his own skull clean
with that hooked limb of land--
curling more and more away from him
when once it drawled fortresses
of sumptuous dunes, unzipping ferns,
and now barely registers a twitch
from the season's last combers.
Smugly tucked in the clouds
he tries zeroing in on the streetlamps,
the veiled apprehensions of small towns
with their buzzwords and codes,
the winded and the overly discussed.
Oh the contradictions lit up by flight!
Pools sustained and then emptied by tide,
buds swollen in the noon sun's stoked glance,
all diffused by some fact about weather,
an excuse to scoot by, walk the aisles.
He wants to utter something never sized
up or positioned on the tongue--
a vocabulary informed more by distances
or even the absence of gravity.
Is it these barren surroundings lending him
this sudden degree of serenity, this amenity
towards the land and its inhabitants

or is it these recycled cues that invade him,
sweeping off any proofs, the acquired smile
shelved as he dwindles so obviously to sleep?

Photosynthesis

So rotten we come to this--
no strength to stand or to sit,
even suck from a straw,
saying no more no maybe
these commotions we make with
our hands less convincing
than the ghosts who assist us
walking out of the room--
even the light reassuring us
we've nothing left to sound out,
nothing left to be released from its debt.

Black ants float on the nectar.
Bees drop from out the sunlight
like believers doped over with love.
Darkness is an accelerant. Our own breath.
Even the flat ginger ale always failing our lips.
So is death like a stitch, the last knot to be tied
or the thread at the start as we're slurped into being?
Don't repeat my mistakes, it seems always to tell us.
But we ask to be turned from the window again--
just the thought of taking anything in
more than our bodies can stand.

Matthew Lee Bain's poetry has appeared in *The Missing Fez*, *Penny Dreadful*, *Haz Mat Review*, *Children*, *Churches*, and *Daddies*, *Experimental Forest*, *Nomad's Choir*, *Matchbook*, *The Nocturnal Lyric*, *Scavenger's Newsletter*, and *The Storyteller*. His short fiction has been published in *Happy*, *Art:Mag*, *Outer Darkness*, *Liquid Ohio*, *2001 Killer Frog Contest* (1st place in short story category), *Dark Moon Rising*, and a four-piece series in *Black Petals Magazine*. I am also currently a column writer for *Circle Magazine*.

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