

## Panels from a Celestial Autumn

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*i will wade out / till my thighs are steeped in burning flowers / i  
will take the sun into my mouth / and leap into the ripe air  
~ E. E. Cummings*



One piecemeal boy made whole in the woods—moonflower  
solace, embered-air haven—a soothing quiet, unlike home,  
welcomed even by an unkindness of ravens.



Before his first shave, he fell from oaken arms. The storm  
snapped the sky's back, took the shape of a throat shouting  
flames. Between flash & clap, anxiety's flutterings burnished  
his gut taut. Jupiter held the current easy in his hand, slipped it  
through the lad from collar to hip. The ground forced smoke  
from his wounds, slowed air & sound. Small clouds of mournful  
duskywings haloed over his brokenness: *You will mend*, they  
promised, *You will mend*.

Over the years, the bolt captured by his body cleaved another  
tree into his chest—a raised asterism rivered across ribs &  
shoulder; its bare branches needling as he grew. Later, lovers

trace the tattooed lace of blue-black wrens; scar-feathers rise & fall with every breath.

As both Daphne & Apollo, the arborist chases himself deeper through thick sorrel, wild-astered loam—buries galaxies of quartz for bright vines to root. By vespers, the crows' beauty-doomed calls remind him he's sewn together only with acorns & lightning.

*body as dying star, shattered bone temple, an uppercut, as dieback, a tuning fork—body as blade singing through wheat*



You sparrowed off to another land, another language—presuming I was simply an instrument to unstring. Listen now, neighbor-boy, a girl can harvest memory & I remember everything.



I was born when the spark was fading, a gibbous face turned her cold gaze elsewhere. Saturn called me from its

hexagon storm, violent winds churning for years; we had an understanding. Above rooftops, over houses, sheds, & huts, cycles of abuse exposed in isolated edifices, betrayal atop a hunter-green chesterfield. The universe laden with sleepless planets, their flocks of rings tended & ordered. Yet no witness that gray day—where was my shepherd moon? Where was his?

The flashes arrive with autumn loneliness: corduroy chafe, fingers raking thigh, brazen grazing—repressed recollections collage into interior fractures, tidal locking of body & memory cuff together in tethered spin, peeling bark, a hawthorn howling. In Greek, the word for “eclipse” means *to abandon, to darken, to cease to exist*. I tell my girl-self each time she lights a candle in this dark, she’s made a small fire.

*body as mosaic of dead leaves, cindered coronet, an abscess, a malgrown antler, body as torn pocket that once carried joy*



For years, her poemwork involved dipping arrows into tinctures of monkshood. Beneath her shawl of suffering, she yearned only for two gifts: to be seen, to be understood.



Lake-eyed & wolf-bit, she dead reckons the hardscape of illness & rough sleep, learns to distrust October's hue. Solar flares persimmon cheek & neck—Venusian heat floods her limbs, transforms joints into gourds. She slides the windows wide—her tear-toned calls telescope across the Sea of Longing. She holds her breath for an answer like nightfall awaits the stars.

Somehow she is always preparing for winter—pleading for unseasonal snow or strong gusts to cover tracks, dressing in layers to prevent cleaving. Wind-torn, ash-weak: scatter, scatter, scatter—perhaps he views broken things more beautiful. All her hollows planed by years of neglect. And her bones—even those. I dream of her happiness: opening a fresh notebook under an almond arbor, legs crossed in a yellow cane chair, a quiet cup of tea as a lone blue orchard bee ravishes the last bloom.

*body as forgotten island, nation of white flags, an ocean of driftwood & stone, a windharp—cliffside, body as plate glass under troubled horses*



Stardom & gold bluster round musicians' crowns & cozy sycophants who wheedle. Always at their beck & call for any strain of benumbing—be it pill, pipe, glass, or needle.



She sings Christmas carols in September to speed the year along, foggy in the black hole of addiction's damp sleeves—organza skin, grisaille visage. No longer did she want to live through this. U-Haul packed & ready for home. She left her radiant basslines as lodestars for others to follow.

Moonrise to moonset is a day of waiting for the light to disappear. That last push of heaven-dust

honeyed her veins—euphoric in the bathtub's cupped palm. How close she was to clean, a getaway, the tender scent of hay. Like all satellites hurtling in this graveyard orbit, she will never land.

*body as a pincushion cape, Mercury in retrograde, an amber  
bottle on the sill, a regal supernova, body as a skirt of hair falling  
from a loosened knot*



In dreams, we roam the moors—wandering a veil's length  
apart. A galleon's spade-shaped anchors tombstone the heather,  
pattern a strange field of upside down hearts.



O Mother, how I understand you better through my own  
ripening. Lately, my body's not fit for comfort or migration,  
only worried unraveling. A chime in hard rain twists to & fro  
from *tried* to *tired*. I cursed your curtailing, spun a labyrinth  
from unspoken apologies—is that why my head feels nebula, a  
burgundy helix of helium & dust? You taught me how not to  
live: all those years you were not dead but might as well have  
been.

Bats & hawk moths visit night flowers when you return; I'd  
know your rustle of complex comfort anywhere. *Grieving is*

*also a form of dying, you say, Turn up the collar of mourning a  
day too many ☾ at duskfall the coachman will arrive at your  
door—the latch turns, stairs unfold; your mouth full of polished  
jet.*

*body as first leaf turning, bonfire of regret, an undiscovered  
constellation, a volley of opal-tailed comets, body as a place of  
shining*



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\*Wikipedia contributors: "Eclipse." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*