

CL Bledsoe

A New Chaw

I'm on the roof with a new chaw. You've
been a bullseye your whole life. Just stand
still and wait for the good word. Raised
for it with the true book as instruction.
A cane pole for the mudhole of humanity.
A snare for the fleet-footed dream.
I dropped out of high school to pick
strawberries and drink. It was me,
five brothers who all enlisted, six sisters
who ran away as soon as they learned
the cardinals. Ma and Paw working up
a real hatred in the lean to means there's
more on the way. You can hear 'em squeak
when the cicadas shut up. Hope is just
another town in Arkansas. When the roof
leaked, we planted grass on it for the goats
to eat. Cows grazed our corn husk pillows.
I've heard there's a world where men
don't itch every second. Where the body
isn't a slow-drying wound. When winter
finally came, we lay out in the yard, praying
the snow would take us away with its melt.

Things To Reinvent Yourself As

A cure for the plague.

A plague.

A collection of furry abacuses used for mathematical rituals.

A stone in God's eye.

A man learning how to fall.

A man who never gets up.

A pair of blood-stained glasses.

A cure for near-sightedness.

A certificate given in lieu of living wages.

A collection of heads donated by billionaires.

A Taco Bell dollar menu.

A memory of joy that never ends.

The smell of her hair.

The taste of her skin.

An unnecessarily complex answer to essential questions meant to shut down the questioner.

A burned-out town that remembers how to dance.

A raindrop in a mud puddle.

A solution for a problem that doesn't exist.

A problem for the family.

A problem everyone is fine with.

Someone who will learn.

Someone who mumbles their way to the truth.

The Good.

The Necessary.

Yourself, but with healthy coping mechanisms.

Yourself, as you were meant to be.

I Want to Send the Wolves Again

I need mid-morning to listen for a minute.
I need the falling body to pause.
I need the light to bend the other way, just
long enough for me to figure this thing out.
Something is howling from my bedroom.
Something wants a commitment I don't
know how to give.
Something won't be satisfied until all
the towels are labelled and in place.
The sky is a tryptic.
The sky has a few choice words for me.
The sky is tired of being called last,
of having to always instigate the conversation.
I want to kick time's ass.
I want to smack belief upside the head.
I want violence to take off that dress
and sit on my face for a little while.
I don't think any of this is going to lead
where I need to go.
I don't think anyone is even listening.
I don't think think even got the memo.
A little attribute to sweeten the pot.
A little mark to let us know the way home.
A little motive to send home.
There's a growl somewhere that's not my stomach.
There's a hunger I want to feed.
There's a need I don't even know how to spell.
I'm sorry. I'll do better.
I'm sorry. You are probably right.
I'm sorry. Please come back to bed.

Mud

We were dust, which is the next step toward rebirth. Missing ribs, too proud to eat another apple. All our lives, we'd dreamed of someday being men. Sandalwood and Old Spice. A Riceland cap and cracked boots. When you're drowning in the sea, it's best to go with the waves and hope for land. At night, we rode rice stalks to fight witches in the skies. All we really wanted was their time, a stray eye to catch. Someone to help. But we didn't know another way to stop the tide. On full moons, we trudged down to hell to battle the devil. This is what you do. If someone had offered to build a statue, we'd have whipped them wee wee wee all the way home and stuck it in a drawer somewhere for the next time we made shine. Paid off and quiet, the house sat high and lonesome on that white chalk hill, while we waited for the dust to tell us something to fix, to sleep on the couch, to watch it die slow while we crumpled our hats in our hands and said nothing.