

Stephanie Kaylor

texts

I'd forgotten how to write, my words  
asphalt chalk laid bare before your eyes  
washing over as I read in their reflection  
lucidity in reverse, a single poem,  
a language in which I was bystander,  
laughing as I shot each bullet  
empty as the dredge I wanted  
to tunnel away not from you  
but the silence.

## Blown Out

I celebrated twice last year,  
first on the day itself and again  
when it was more convenient  
for everyone else. My birthday

followed yours as I followed you  
who already had all you needed  
without a cake so i took two  
bending all the rules

til slanting the cosmos  
spilling stardust on my tongue too dry  
to say even silently to myself what it was

I wanted. I wanted you but what did I want from  
you that you hadn't given up already?  
Flesh or phrases & their fated ash, air  
stale as last year's that came out in a sigh  
deferring before the segue from birth

to arbitrary day, no smoke  
& mirrors of a wish but a flame  
that caught my hair like the open thread  
of a firecracker

extinguished before sending me above  
with each flicker like a shard  
of broken glass reflecting  
only some fragments of myself  
too light to carry that behind me  
& the fact that we were born  
back-to-back.

**insomniac**

a twin mattress  
pinching a dream i thought was shared  
since you seemed to fit & i  
offered, underlining highlighting  
not the meaning  
of the words the  
pallid world they held  
but the precision of its start  
its rushing toward a crooked end

**Okay, Cupid**  
**(Okay, see...)**

I didn't plan to come back  
and move across the river  
where I'd look at all the city lights  
wrestling in a blur

yet still discern  
some single bulb  
in some single room  
as you &

yours  
its single window's view  
where I'd look at all the stars  
and moon

and i couldn't trust the maps  
the constellation line  
incisions cutting through  
whatever truth

concealed  
by some fire in your eye.

**passenger**

you gave me the last word  
fed up with all the hunger  
that never let me choose just one  
let alone commit as I left alone  
and told you I didn't see  
the point & you  
grisly silent you  
didn't either or at least  
you didn't tell me  
so I put my shoes back on  
and hitched a couple rides  
to find as many as I could:  
dirty swivels & metalcold  
remainders I gave neither  
food nor shelter only direction  
for an emigration toward  
your heart, as if I ever knew  
the way, as if I'd ever hold  
your papers before blistering  
away, somewhere on the coast.