

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.