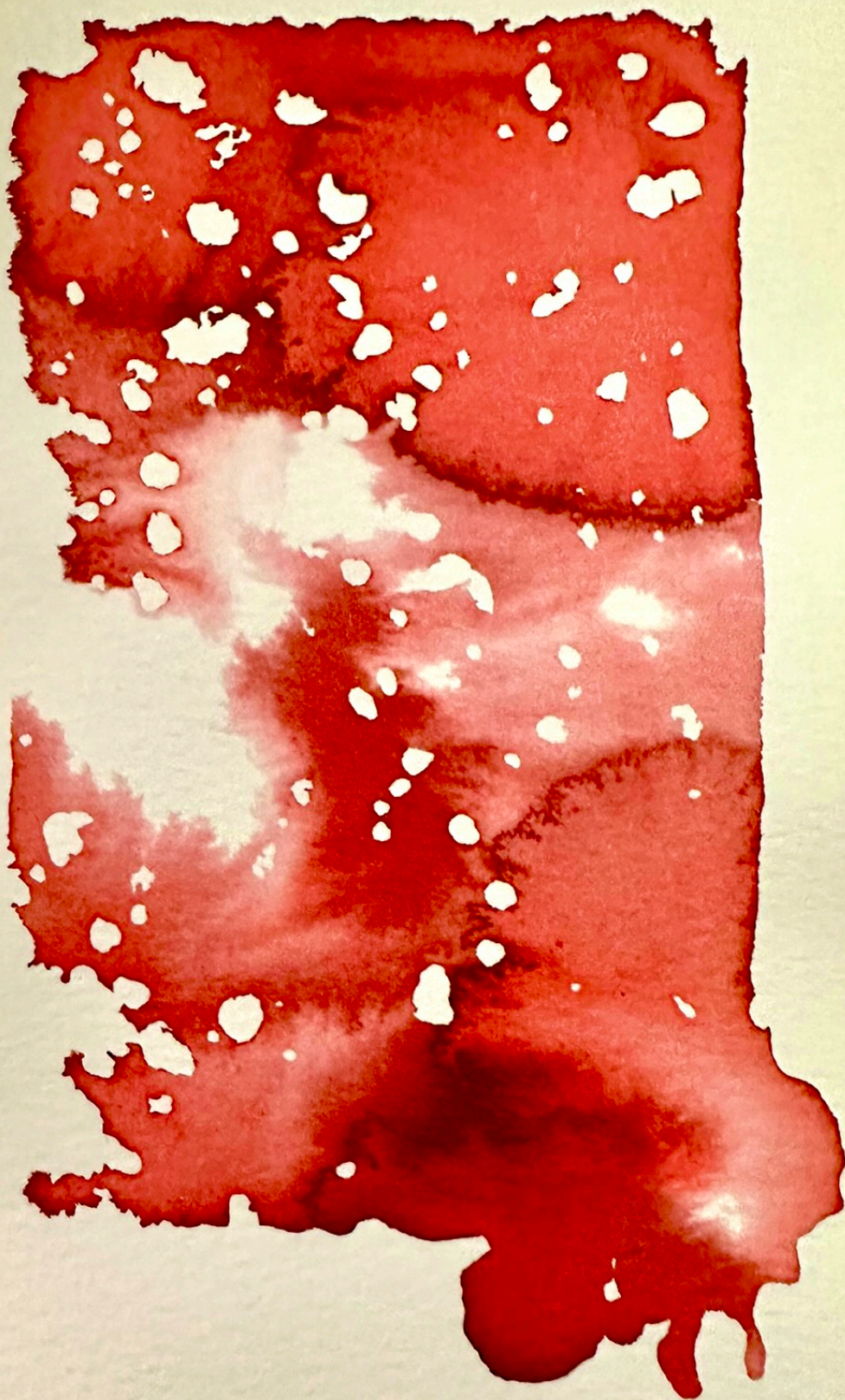


# A Dozen Sonnets



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ISBN: 978-1-7325087-2-9

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we ran out of gas before we got there  
metaphorically of course the car was  
just an ancient generation's notion  
of freedom or some such so later when

we seemed to be writing a story for  
the new employer on the optimal  
monetization of the eternal  
memes

(to avoid the friends convenience made—  
their brotips and conversations like photos  
of completely uncluttered interiors)

we made a slow-motion escape attempt  
but were swallowed by the slothy summer

and rose at noon to find the cicadas  
gleefully gone on their fatal picnic



in what may have been a park weeds  
without flowers climb white clouds cling  
to the mountain an open wound  
that won't stop oozing broken mouths  
growl in rusted junk chain-link yards

the town gets smaller with every  
breath though they never think to bite  
the hands that keep them in cages  
while kids throw stones at a hornet's  
nest dream of pills and lottery

wins and the dog no longer feels  
the chain that choked his younger days

and those who ran away still see  
themselves mirrored in cracked black stone

with false starts buzzing around my head  
what do I do do I recall one fly I cut in half with a  
glass while trying to trap and free it—then sculpt  
some little line to be stomped bloodless by the  
sound of boots on the ceiling—so do I then try to  
persist with this misty I and words like persist—but  
to speak plainly there is no window in which to  
speak plainly about a small flower past my boots  
that I wish could fly into colors that open a window  
into a land where I could lie...

but now I'm cut in half and half of me  
may persist and maybe that I will fly

skimmed emails we deleted too quickly  
may have mentioned the forest of bright spears  
and ships ready to launch, but once we saw the  
reports on the quarterly report from  
Ichthyosaur & Associates we  
had no doubt what they were up to with those  
color-shifting lobbyists and gift baskets  
reeking of brine and though they wrote of missed  
opportunities no one missed the flotsam  
flecked with blood, tossed by ceaseless waves that could  
break on our beloved beans just learning  
to climb towards those heavy clouds pierced by sun—

he stopped, mumbled something roses fingers  
dawn and walked away from the empty chairs

since the selfie came out blurry  
giving that mosquito my cheek  
to suck its snack while the old crows  
guffawed my self-promotion by  
the abandoned railroad tracks may  
not have been my finest moment

so in this phlegmy rain I wait  
for the final ferry and this  
may be the encephalitis  
talking but I feel I grow fat  
or waste on the food of strangers'

thumbs as I grope  
in the dark for  
a light so you  
can learn my name



## Sonnet In Which the Last Two Lines Have Shipped But Are Running Late

do you clap when it arrives in crumpled  
corrugated cardboard dropped on the steps  
of your demand and expectation—me?  
I long to hear the soft song of  
the box cutter the little sigh  
as light uncovers the gifts of darkness

but enough of my many weaknesses  
let's upgrade our kitchens hats and bookshelves  
lounging in the recycled air gulp supplements  
unthinking of the debt and folks living  
in fire and try to laugh since we never  
got the hang of writing protest songs

sweet voices in a mist-filled wood like a memory of  
the moon just a few drops of blood from your  
yearly broken back and you can play until fat  
with all the things this difficult crossword  
puzzle doesn't attract me now that some grey  
has snuck in so why not stay I lost my train  
of thought again but with the mental gps  
installed it was no problem to rejoin and then  
pick from one of the available choices and at  
last enter new star city

what prize did you hope to hold in those smooth  
hands for the plan sketched in cloud and unbuilt—  
what melody might have flown forth if you  
freed yourself from petty politics of  
the boardroom and tested those scrawny wings—  
but you sat with a job safe as socks and  
a single number near the cold solstice

now in the damp the aches where you bend while  
those black glacier teeth topple in tepid  
tea you mumble to the cat it wasn't  
all bad these bloody feet could still march this  
hand salute the lurking shadow who smiles  
at the coughing cubicle dwellers soon  
to be churned into cheap fertilizer

having made peace with the rocks that  
I call shoes, grown accustomed to  
the furry creatures living in  
my sinuses and the shows they  
watch into the deep oven night

I watch one fork of lightning free  
the tree that dropped only small sour  
fruit, and return to arranging  
oyster shells to resemble a  
wave and ask is this the dream it's

so quiet here it's hard to hear  
the song of my empty stomach  
or the rattle of the bones of  
the dead like pills stuck in my throat

but what we got was some sequel  
made for the merchandising rights  
so let's instead unpack this strange  
light after a summer storm near  
evening with its light bouquet of  
back pain—in those glowing clouds you  
could believe the benevolent  
aliens might pop down for tea  
and cake and perhaps slip you a  
few space-time secrets but they fail  
to arrive again so climb to  
bed and nudge the little dog from  
her pillow throne and sink and sigh  
chest collapsed but eyes on the sky

with what time is left listen to  
air conditioners drop drop drop  
on the used tea bag of summer  
while the waves of heat hit you on  
uneven shards of sidewalk—though  
later perhaps you'll find some sweet  
solitude and dream some drip could  
bring a forgotten bloom or rare  
herb back but the brink keeps creeping  
and that green shade so far away—  
so retreat to concrete above  
the noise but not the heat and make  
a quiet in which your fingers  
if nothing else may sprout some leaves

a soft rain on  
the late morning  
creature by the  
curb crushed silver  
the room of tea  
comfort and work  
unwanted my  
fingers recoil  
coil a million  
times a million  
times our mother  
the snake slips out  
of her skin to  
feel grass again