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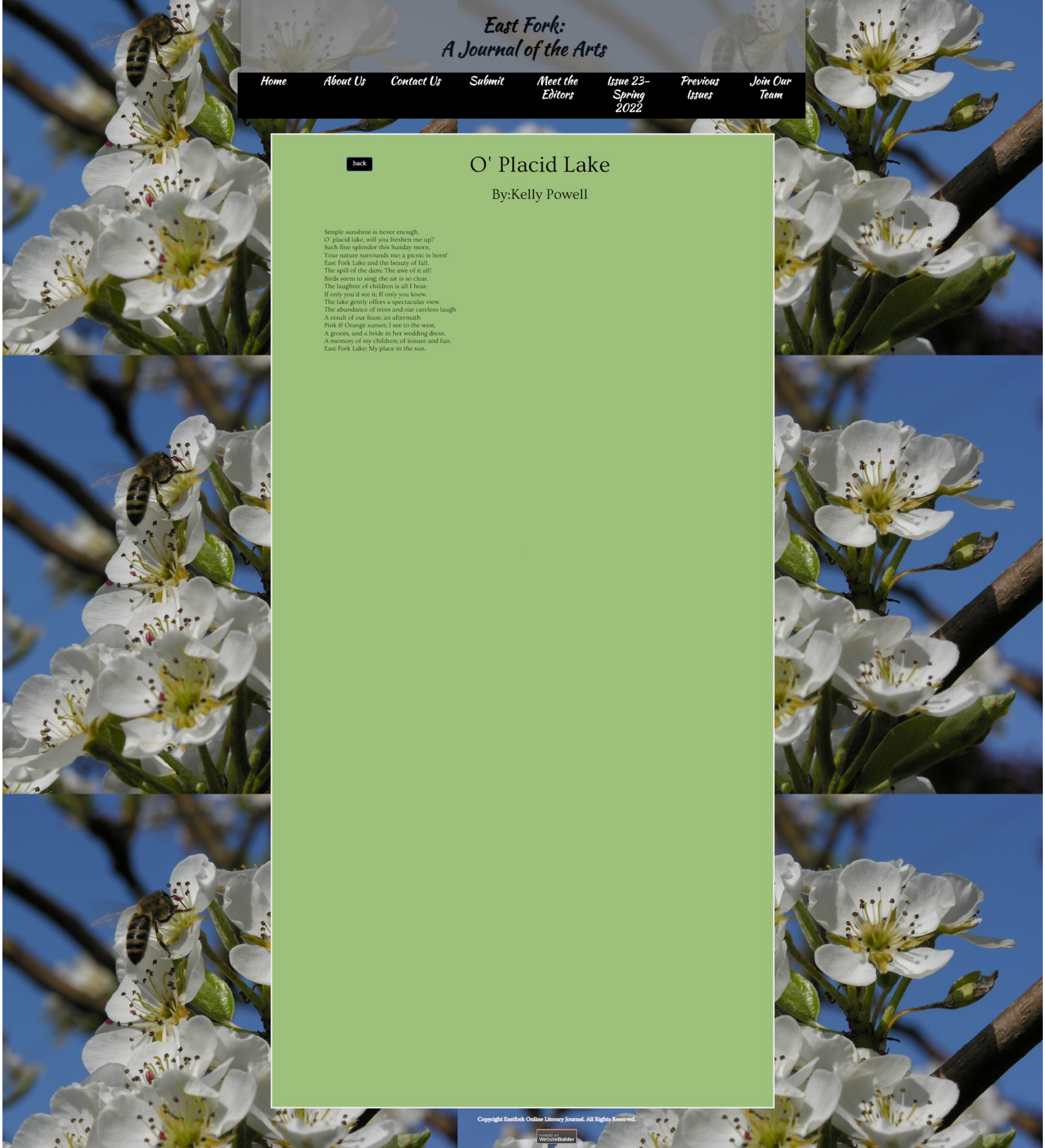
Oppressor

By:Erin O'Toole

Oppressor

Menace is the ideal in which your mind
takes rest. Find comfort in the girl
who is alone. Beautiful to the eye, her looks, a crusader against
ever an ego. Dwindle away in her rays, she is blind.
It could be a moment to heal her,
pleases you to see her unknowingly suffer.
Pacify thoughts of a lesser self, by burying
her deeper in her self conscious.

Menace takes who ever it pleases. Pacify her.



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O' Placid Lake

By: Kelly Powell

Simple sunshine is never enough,
O' placid lake, will you freshen me up?
Such fine splendor this Sunday morn,
Your nature surrounds me; a picnic is born!
East Fork Lake and the beauty of fall,
The spill of the dam; The awe of it all!
Birds seem to sing; the air is so clear,
The laughter of children is all I hear,
If only you'd see it; If only you knew,
The lake gently offers a spectacular view,
The abundance of trees and our careless laugh
A result of our feast; an aftermath
Pink & Orange sunset; I see to the west,
A groom, and a bride in her wedding dress,
A memory of my children; of leisure and fun,
East Fork Lake; My place in the sun.

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Two Poems

By: Nicole Jennings

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RAW

She was beautiful
Head shaved
Face bare
Striking
A beauty that would impact one's life
Is what I had the privilege of witnessing that day
It was not the single digits that defined her waste
Nor the meat of her breast that filled her bra that made me stare
It was not the swaying of her hips that captivated me
It was her shaved head, the lack of hair
As women, we are defined by the locks that fall down our
Backs
By the over flowing meat that spills out our shirts
We are made to think that beauty is a lower number on the
Scale, oh how we torture ourselves
Beating our face with product until we no longer recognize
Ourselves, a reflection we are not familiar with
We aren't beautiful until we are strangers to ourselves
But not her, her confidence radiated off her deep caramel skin
Bare face
Beautiful

Rituals

I often wonder why I am so obsessed with the ritual of getting tattooed
The anticipation of the appointment,
The buzzing of the machine,
The needle under the skin for countless hours,
The pain,
The wanting more
Perhaps it's the reason why I stay with you,
Not knowing if today will be a good day for us
Hanging on every syllable that retreats from your lips
And how they hit me like daggers,
Penetrating the deepest parts of me,
You have mastered the pain you cause,
So precise in drawing out every tear,
Cautious to how exactly you have my heart ache
When you find an artist, who is good at what they do,
You stick with them
You can count on a well-executed piece
My love, no matter the beautiful damage you cause me
You will be the only one I trust with what you do so well
You make heartache a fucking masterpiece

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Two Poems

by Kristen Wilson

Everything Goes On
From: Everything Must Go by Joel Peckham

In the blue house, beside the flower field, at four
in the morning, a drunken mother throws fists
into walls of a 200 year old home made
for a family twice their size - as if they might
have intended on furthering their family or picked it
blindly, auctioned for a low price,
from the broken people who once lived beside the
flower
field where they picked and pulled at peonies
on the colored flat, quiet as church

mice during the funerals. Nobody speaks
to her, holds her hand. Nothing
happy here. Nothing they have seen before
on every newspaper in town. Another stone is
placed. Another. And she breaks
down to her knees and doesn't know
where to begin. That bastard, he killed our
only children, over crystal He's
damn lucky he's gone. I would've - And the pain that
lingers in my hands
my knuckles explode in synchronized rhythm
for my own blood on Route 32. Everything slows.
Me, low on empathy, exhausted, empty out a loaded
gun. Everything stops. Unwilling. Un-
happy. Everything goes on. And a widow

sinks into a clay ground of spirits, except
she isn't the kind to die disgracefully. Too
young, too bright, too emotionally sound. And too
many people
sink into spiritually barren grounds, insanity and
sanctity,
not a soul gets it or even tries to and said I
misunderstood,
because they did. Most people. Even then, they don't

hear of these things: the way it happened
to them on purpose like predestined demise. How
dead are you now inside the barren ground? And, tell
me, who
will care for your children playing up in the peonies
now?

Teacup?

You fill me up,
with warmth and good feelings.
Then you empty me,
till there is nothing left.
You bathe me in steamy sauna,
then splash water in my face.
Then you leave me for a timeout, to let me blow off
steam.

You come back to me, just to fill
me with ice.
I feel it in me and it consumes my being.
To feel something.
Just to be drained by you once more.
Just to be left to dry.
You throw an elbow in my face and knock me
off my pedestal,
and to the ground I fall.
And the worst of all?
All you ever did was use me,
for my tea.

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Two Poems

By: Youseffe Ahalla

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Salt City

Descending
from the olive tree by our ancient house
to the shakable ground
The handwritten poem
hidden under the nest
nestled in one of the many branches
While I was rushing
to the city of salt
to meet Raja
the only girl who offers red flowers
to occupying soldiers
with camouflage and automatic guns
she was waiting in the rainy street
Spring and fall
beside a refugee camp
which grows wheat
And fighters with strong arms
to resist
And welcome many bullets
with their open chest
And that year
Was an open season
to assassinate comedy
In our childhood games
with drones
flying like beautiful bees of many colors
the history of sadness that we share
Raja and I
since the soldiers surrendered, Salt City
was preserved in the poetry of resistance
which was called "terror"
on the left side of the occupying soldiers' brains
but their right sides love the flowers
from Raja.

Ascending
to the sky
after My soul was stuck
between two bullets
my blood watered red strawberries
because fruit in this city
have the taste
of salt from death
I still heard
a song
playing on a phonograph
While
mothers in the backyard of our house
prepared graves
digging the shakable ground
for their sons
to rest.

Tiny Details

Most of the time
you cannot see me
I live
tied to your dread locks when you are dancing
I'm the metal key when you open your room
To the early morning lights
often The logarithms
if you touch your screen to navigate
the shaking nerve in your left eye
If you are shaking
the moon in your dream
if you lost your way
the letters
In which you deliver your break up note to me
For the millionth time
quickly you forget
When you are reading the lines in my right palm
explaining how our shared life will go
each morning you doubt if I still love you
like I used to

Years ago, we
sat under the peach tree
by your old house
speaking our poetry
loud to the walls
closing our eyes
and enjoying the echo
of our first, raw feelings

Years later,
our romance became digital
we fell into the spider web "Internet"
our poems went viral
we gained a lot of followers
but we lost the public's applause

Most of the time
we went to jail
because the opening line in your poems
was a smashed egg on the face of politicians
they accused us of noble crimes
smuggling roses
from hand to hand
writing stanzas and rhyming words
In any coffee shop we could find
buying stamps and recycled paper
to write letters for anyone
who believed in beauty of poetry
we jumped on the first train
stopped at a random destination
only
one time they caught us
writing our poems on the old wall of history
without an ISBN
back to jail
they let me go the next day
but they keep you one week
for "tiny details."

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Waxing

By Lark Omura

Waxing

The moon let out a sigh,
Again she had shone brightly
hundred-watt smile outshining Orion and his hounds,
And again, she felt, few perceived her.

People were so busy these nights
gazing at their own glowing screens,
Handheld satellites orbiting room to room,
gravitational force so strong they were seldom let go.
The moon wasn't jealous. Although,
she could hardly keep from noticing people
looking skyward through lenses,
virtually viewing her in backlit rapture,
scrolling through snapshots of her uncapturable iridescence.

She had to remind herself
unlike this planned obsolescence,
lasting until the end of a battery-life,
her glow was a powerful forever.
She comforted herself, knowing she could co-exist
with the bright heat of day, incandescent white
popping against a pale blue sky
while plasma screens relied on shadow for their dim, synthetic beams.

After all, the thought occurred,
without her would be an end to rooftop lovemaking,
flannel blankets spread over sandpaper shingles under stars,
naked bodies howling like werewolves,
the crisp midnight air nipping their behinds.

If she got lazy, and decided not to show up, she reflected
the ocean would not rise, scattering sea-colored jellyfish along its shores,
No ultramarine beachglass outlining the edges of high tide,
a slow subsiding seaweed trail decorated by broken shells
and blue.

She was the constellation-framed centerpiece
allowing late-night strolls romance,
Illuminating the deep black hue of witching hour,
a lamp shining on an indigo wall.

She possessed the power to occasionally cover up the sun,
blazing ring of light suspended in the sky for an instant,
ten thousand pairs of tiny paper eyeglasses
gawking from below.

She remembered then
how tribes once gathered to worship her,
bringing drums and dancing in her honor,
leaving offerings of sweet fruit and honey.
And the two lovers in Calgary who, many years ago now,
had named their firstborn for her.
Smiling to herself, she recalled
the waning width of her shimmering crescent,
on the night that they first met.

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Trees

By:Victoria Crossman

Trees

I.
Trees drip water from first spring rain,
I can smell them dying. Green fades to brown, and
Withers away. Roots seep in toxins, spreading to
Body, trunk, stretching to outer limbs, arms
Reaching, calling, asking, as if to say,
"Please save us." And we cut them down to quiet them.
Sawdust clouds our vision and hovers
Over a plot of land. I watched it disappear, like it was
Never there. What kind of times are these?

II.
Bitter air waves in the forest,
Limbs freeze but they're green inside.
Still living, pulsing breath. Frozen
Mask of winter hides life beneath, hard soil
Near the roots, but underneath soft life,
Nourishing the body. I want to put my hands in the soil,
Feel the earth on my fingertips. I cannot get through
Frozen layers, it must be for the trees alone, and
Not I. They were here first.

III.
The trees, the trees. They are alive with
Rage of a breed dying out, of a
Breed hybridized, a breed inorganic,
Cross contaminated. Alive with
Modified limbs for healthier growth,
Specialized molecular structure to
Improve aesthetic quality. Alive with hatred because
They are not alive. The trees.
The trees are dead.

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Three Poems

By:Devon Humphrey

Sharp Curve

I wanted to crawl out of that old light
in my cat's eye I could see you;
too vibrant for me
my fingers bled and I drank from them

There was a sharp curve to the moon that didn't hurt
and the stars were small metal particles that remained,
the only evidence the night allowed of that change in spirit

Holy union of nightmares call out to the unseen
the outside smells like wet dirt,
an old walkway that has become caked to the bottom of my shoe.
My third eye eclipses at the oddest time

Dreamy Mango

I had a dream
of a holy matrimony in the
dark
where ripe mangoes broke over
our heads and released
papaya seeds
as if birthing a swarm
of butterflies
that I plucked for her
out of a still, hot
light-bulb
I hid between her thighs

Strong rosewater I can taste
gritty between my teeth.
I used to be just fine
setting the table with
a knife on one side and
a fork on the other
but now my plate is cracked
and I only need a spoon

Paper Cranes

We unfold ourselves like paper cranes
biding our time along predestined seams

Once built for hope we tear them down
...softly

My fingers untangling from yours
my emotions bright, gleaming things throbbing in unity

I hide them under my floorboards along with letters I wrote to myself
dreams that now fester and blacken alongside the mold growing there

I look to you
my phantom,
my burnt demon

10,000 wishes made and I was so close
perhaps I did not fold fast enough

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Three Poems

By:Martha Jones

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Is it Right?

First line included from "After Long Silence" by W.B. Yeats Speech

after long silence;
is it right to catch your words and string each one along
until there's a chain between you and me?
They inch across your tongue
hesitant-
awkward.
They've forgotten how to smoothly slip from your lips.
I choose not to notice, for I'm entranced
by the gentle murmur of your voice.
I haven't forgotten silence is a harsh master,
teaching me to wait until your fingertips beckon.
For your words- survivors of suffocated thoughts-
to struggle out from the cavernous skin that contains you.
I protect each word that escapes, for they're a piece of you.

Grim Reaper

Dearest-
desire does not suit your complexion.
Your cheeks are pink against your untainted skin
your lips as dark and lush as an ambrosia apple
that drips with the morning dew.
Your neck is carved like a vase
and your hair the shade of mahogany.
I watch your eyes dip into the sunset
until they resonate with every color.
What a shame.
With one stroke
I'll silence your cheeks until they're fallow.
I'll dry your lips until they're shriveled.
With a flick of my wrist
I'll crack your irises
until the last drop of color is drained.
Then I'll dress you for your journey
in a shroud of shredded cerecloth.
Around your neck
I'll hang a hollow hour glass
and in your hand a coin for your passage.
My scythe will lead us to the river Styx.

Darling-
Crying is useless.
I'll wipe your tears of ash
with my cursed bones
as we descend beneath earth.
I'll release you to Charon,
to travel across the river in the ferry.
Come, for time is calling with a demand:
Worship the hands that transformed you,
kiss the hem of my cloak
for Death has prepared you for Hades
Death has led you to your new destination
And Death is now your master.
Renew Us

Redeem me.
Understand that my regrets are a riptide-
pulling, sucking, gulping me under,
ridiculing me until I release my unrelenting rage.
You entrusted reason into my upturned palms.
I wrapped you in the residue of my monstrosity
as you lay slumbering in my rebellious arms.

Restore me.
Rapt observance kept you reaching for my universe,
craving the obscure aurora that reeled you out of reality.
You risked your rights, rewards, and reputation
though they urged you to reconsider.

Rescue me.
I destroyed your rest, leaving unrest to prey upon you.
I ripped a part your self-confidence
and unbraided the strands of your reverent DNA.

Release me.
You must relinquish my past or I remain bound
to my wrong doings, repeatedly running to free myself.

Revive me.
Utter remorse robs me of you, of us. Please. Return to me.

Once Known

I walked on a road I once knew. It remembered me, some of me,
not all. I didn't blame it for I saw it without past memories. My
neighbor's dog, Abby, meandered around me as we walked. There
weren't any yellow and white colors to touch, just the outline of the
lush grass against the black top. Shadows of hawks would shimmer
across the road. I tried not to step on them. At the end of the road,
the point where you turn around, I saw the barn. Red bricks decked
the front and for a moment it looked proud. But scrambles of wood
poked through the window, like a boy wearing a suit with a
crooked tie. The NO HUNTING OR TRESPASSING sign mocks me,
and I pause. Should I? The barn is hushed, as if holding its breath,
waiting for me to decide if I would discover its secret. It quivers as
I head to the decaying side wall, a doorless door frame slumped
in the middle. I enter, stepping on piles of wooden boards, rags, ropes,
not even touching the floor. The loft is caved in, long boards sliding
into mountains of already piled boards as if it was a jumbled
matchbox. A dust covered newspaper is stuck to the floor with the
headline Woman Convicted of Murdering Her Husband and I
wonder why the barn has kept it, why the barn hasn't pushed
the bed frame, rusty cans, dressers, and boards out of its windows. I
imagined the loft collapsing on me, the despised boards cracking into
my skull, how my face would be pushed into people's past possessions
until I was crushed into a relic as well.