Two Poems

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Self-Portrait As Trotsky’s Essay On Revolutionary Art

Call me the uncrossing
of arms placed over the chest. I am not here
to receive only the blessing.
I am no longer the paper body
that might fear a chalice, I will not drown
in the compulsory guilt of distributing
each oasis. Call me the kingdom
of necessity, I can see up far
the illuminated road ahead and venture
further in. I will take
the host.

You should not assign me
as introduction. Some eager student, eyes
bright pilgrim springs
will get hung up on my ill-defined
purview, say there must
be other imperatives. Leave before the last
battle, which is when I reach for that seventh
book, the betrayal that calls
ey every talking mouse to a barn door
and judges how they’ve scurried. I cannot abide
the resurrection of a single stable
into heaven. I know every lion
is a donkey in stolen skin.
I pile every copy.
Lock the barn door.
Set it on fire, and for kindling
a smudged printout of my self,
the only one.

So just once. It isn’t even a priest
whose thumb lights the forehead,
just a math teacher
helping out at mass. Even forego the church,
say it’s high school linoleum
that forgives the scraping chairs. And then the world
that speaks stars through every crack
in gravity gets a future that extends
past a single human arc.
Is that not eternal renewal, time to learn
to wear lipstick to come back
for the years that aren’t battles,
(“Self Portrait,” continue previous stanza)

for the reflections that linger in desert pools?
If you just have faith this
is the one folding table
where the revolution meets.
And here I am laid out, my body
my promise against the story poison
that says politics is an ape bringing apocalypse
and not our closest aping of cure.

I hold out my hands, right
over left. Do you know how I have yearned
for this. I don’t. I hang my mystic
with a canvas of red yellow glitches at the entrance
to the barn, don’t take them when I leave.
I raise the wafer to my lips.
You wouldn’t abandon the revolution.
That’s all I can say.
The children get to grow up.
Narnia is not dead and this
is not Narnia. My tongue. Your heart
fills with body. I cannot know
this feeling. I have nothing to offer
you who must translate the splinters
of dryad screams. I was only the world
way there. But think if I lived
just one time. And bought you the time
to see the portals in ponds, see them not
interchangeable. To learn better
how to love. And then you could leave me, fulfilled
in an empty barn, where all I can taste
is the hay that’s really there.
We End Capitalism With Lemons

The seams of the white comforter are yellow with the long wait and the glow from the lemon trees. We built a whole greenhouse just for them, so we could always have lemonade. We breathe out citrus and breathe in each other, here in this bare blossoming world where there is time to fall in love. The walls have sunlight on their tongues, and on mine I have you. We have been tired so long. Do you remember how you moved in right away, how our only time to hold each other was in sleep, how your grey nightshirt pulled all the grey from the world outside and left it a shade of bearable. Do you remember stealing lemons from grocery crates, remember stealing from time. How we learned to aim them at the right upper floor windows, saved every seed. And later how your touch should have opened mine but instead I curled tighter on the warm hook of your fingers, lost every climax to an indissoluble core of frozen grey sugar. You have been so patient with the hard lump in my throat. But now we breathe in the sapling world and you on my tongue are so sweet this long-soured sun turns lemonade and it’s not that it’s different between us, here. It’s just that the panic at the window casings has eased. We want to talk as well as smile. And now, here, where there is time to fall in love, I cough up the lump onto the comforter and from the inside out it melts, staining the sheets a shade of soft.