

## Poems by Lana Bella

### DIOR-PALE

fenced in,  
the overcast dawn preceded  
an ominous beginning,  
my eyes found a slim flutter of peach-amethyst light  
stooping over the scars of my body,  
it kept growing until my eyelids nod heavy  
down the bare-knuckled face,

between dawn and silence,  
I am Dior-pale,  
colors fettered at the toes  
while anemia hooked like teeth upward,  
to where the circuit boards in my brain gave in with  
grunts tugging me up to my seat,  
it was any wonder when the passing  
breeze blew my yawns  
into a circus tent,

over and over,  
I took apart the pale so I can get back  
into the deluge of dark again,  
then sometimes,  
I would lay my bones on sweat-soaked sheets,  
lead to and be led  
from this seed of madness,  
boarding up inside the drowning  
of my own words, falling into whispers  
just loud enough to trace,  
absolving me the guilt of living a devalued life--

## A NAMELESS THING

there is a croak,  
something shimmies  
out of the ripples of the air that  
I cannot help to bristle  
my inked quill over  
the papyrus,

at first, the sound  
leaves a ghost of restlessness  
loose on my fingertips,  
the more I tug it,  
the less it struggles,

drawing epithets with  
shadows from the squiggly loops  
of calligraphy, I cannot  
exhaust the fuel of  
this nameless thing that  
touches the tip of my ennui,

its tail brushes  
my bent wrist like a bird flitting  
through a bridal-veiled sky,  
quivering the pages  
so faintly that I can almost see  
the script on the other side--

## A MULBERRY WINE SWEATER

I would sit in my kitchen,  
staring at nothing, smoking, giving ear  
to the malaise of blues riff  
that stitches me  
a mulberry wine sweater,

the yarn in my hands,  
its weight a wreath of stenciled ghosts  
which disrobes questions  
and exposes scars,  
but, I can't see past the tearing wool  
that's drawn by and back,

as still water,  
my patience moves closer to  
the back-stitches' edges,  
skin presses against the wild fibril  
which is not connected  
to any eye,

and like what's raw and torn  
that lays bare on the bed of a single hush,  
I work my finger into those holes  
where memories are snagged,  
in turn,  
which poses a dialectic question:  
how many mulberries can be packed  
into the sweater before  
I thrust my arms into its sensible stitching,  
and sew up all this wine?

## A STRANGER'S BED

I sank into a stranger's bed,  
the musk of whisky barks down my esophagus  
the same way a sharp conversation  
comes startlingly, and uninvited,

I lay on the edge  
of the bed inside an empty room,  
a swath of cobweb in the corner strokes  
the catacomb of my memory,  
outside, a frightened cacophony  
of creatures' yelping and the mechanical arms of  
the dawn reach my ears like  
a grinder's blades,

sunlight shuffles my gaze  
across the room to a blue shirt draped over a chair,  
and nearer to the table,  
my seldom worn party dress sprawled in  
a heap as if it's been mauled and  
left to disarray,

only here could pride be so deafening  
as to be concrete, I catch myself in the winds of revolt:  
my need to stretch with growth to hammer  
out the delicate notes stuck in the throat,  
and the fear of holding on to fever  
with troubled arms  
that revisit the prison-fed idea  
of loneliness.

## BIRTHMARK

the old dirt felt distant  
beneath my feet, yet the same buffalograss  
bowed down the easy pause of inertia,  
oh darling, you too will be waking  
like the shadows  
of enemies within me

when into the muzzled barrel  
of your gun, I burrowed,  
beating off the emerging effigies  
that I mistook  
for spring time's mimosa,  
because it was always you that I  
looked for in the stern face of  
the washed slate sky but

this time, I woke as a sad young thing  
leaving on a train,  
stripped bare of your traversing sea  
in the chamber of bones,  
my eyes bored hard out the window,  
nudging apart  
the rushing prairie's veil,  
as my hands and heart swam among  
the relentless green  
over miles of metal rails

that plunged into the cracks of my skin,  
so I wept, folding shrill of nocturnal  
transit when your vanishing  
abandoned all my mouthful of earth,  
your face,  
indelible as a birthmark,  
streamlined across the universe  
toward the dawning sun--

## BOWL OF FLOUR

she summons solace through clenched teeth,  
a contradiction scissors  
the garbled speech and red-rimmed eyes,  
shreds of lime a piquant malaise  
pleats between her fingers thick of baking flour,

she looks out the glass window,  
her sky is no longer blue but deeply slate,  
by now the fate of her prayers  
is likely shipwrecked halfway here  
and the willow's boughs down by the dock,

she begins to hum the words for hope  
in the language of her mother's tongue,  
but all that remains  
are elegant scars on her familiar accent,  
so she pours the vestige of herself out of her skin  
and into the bowl of flour--

## DAEDALUS RIBS

he prays for dark, for dark to blot out  
her imprints around the bedroom floor--  
morning comes, he falls into the scars  
of light that ferment her ghost like a  
catatonic being waiting to be reborn--

gradually, he drives his body to a space  
so dark, whittling to a settlings riddled  
with old songs, stowing away screams  
and heavens' dealt scores in the hollow  
of a bathos--

as day fades then night churns this glass  
hovel with hair-lines of chrome beneath  
the peeling black, he sits on the vinyl  
chair by the curtained window, one tall  
glass of bourbon coats pungent his tired  
mouth, and fingers toy her absence that  
is no longer limpid--

now, all things bleed under the Daedalus  
ribs, where the womb is scripted with  
blacker things weaving a trail of dancing  
ghosts--

## DECOMPOSITION

This is every dreary day ever told:  
she lives with her drinks freshly poured  
on the rocks, oftentimes watered down,  
a host to many shadows alive when she  
herself is dead. She sits on a three-legged  
chair by the kitchen island, the fourth  
leg lurches like a loose tooth about to give.

Sometimes, on a clear day, sunlight pours  
into her gaping mouth before spilling out  
over specks of dry spittle. Tongue lashes  
the morning burn, fingers clutch tight the  
fridge's cold steel handle until the shakes  
become echoes on her lips.

So faithless is her short-stayed happiness  
that it chokes the breaths and strains her  
brief travel from upright to floor. This is a  
lesson she's learned, yet beneath a thick  
weight of self-delusion, she takes in arms  
the liquid spare, down to the minutes when  
the blood turns sluggish--where salvation  
pulls her muscles then sinews free from the  
bones, realigning her decomposition.



## EXILE

You remained silent for some time. The mint tea in your china cup turned a darker green and grew cold. Outside, the currents flew leaves up its aerial form while the earth shifted in a wash of autumnal rain and relished longing on its taste-buds. Time flowed with icicle feet in the linings of your twill coat and exile. Below the fading light, you stretched then closed your hands as if to shift the congealed blood into a thin filament of stirring atoms. In such a dark, you sit alone, become withdrawn in the shadow, dispersing further in its emotionally unavailable world that rarely sleeps. This galactic world that thrives within is a glimpse of clever remarks, forward smiles, a new map for newer excursions, where you'd planned to jump-start your impassible form into euphoric, if not adolescent dancing. But then it occurs to you, where is the passageway from which to escape out this exile?