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THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING

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THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING is based in Deptford, southeast London, on the same estate where SNIFFIN' GLUE was founded in 1976 by Mark Perry.

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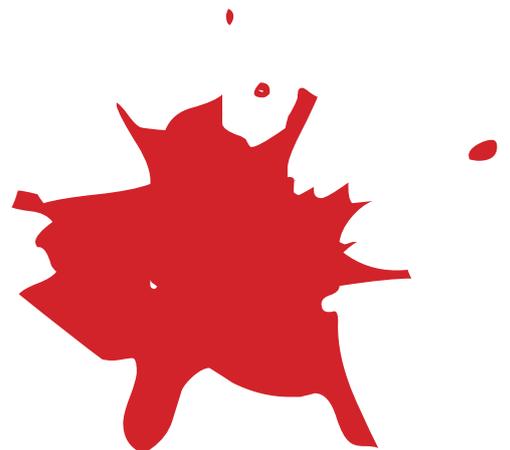
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EILEEN MURPHY

Fortress

When I got my first period
I had just turned eleven,
was hiking hundreds of steps
of a stone fortress in Quebec
on vacation with Grandma and Grandpa,
my Mother's parents,
blood trickling down my inner thigh,
Mother not with us.

Grandma bought me tampons.
I scrunched my bloody underpants
into a nest of toilet paper.
I had cramps, craved bed.
I dared ask Grandma for aspirin.
She was in my hotel room
saying her rosary, trying to get me to
kneel with her.
Too sick, Grandma, too sick.

Later in the arctic summer night
the phone, like a wild beast, rang out.
It was still light, and I was awake.
My father asked in a hearty voice
how I was doing.
Grandma must've squawked.
I imagined my mother saying:
She's growing up too fast.
I'm sorry, Mom.
I'll tell my period
to go back into my
uterus.
We'll keep pretending you don't have
a pubescent daughter.
And thanks for the call.
I'm great.

CASEY RENEE LOPEZ

living is waiting for death when yr a queer in america

im so fucking tired of dying / i shouldnt die / everyday / just to wake up /
every morning

//

we bleed everyday / a paper cut here / a knife wound there / a spray of bullets
across the body on
sundays

//

my heart is sand in my chest / suffocating my vitals / absorbing liquid iron /
rusting / my ribs are
cracked / shards of stained glass / caked in dry blood

//

my lungs are empty bubbles / universes unto themselves / collapsed galaxies /
cosmic dust /
wafting on background radiation

//

queer folks are dying / everyday / trans folks are dying / everyday / &
im still living death / earth
bound / inextricably linked / a walking reminder of mortality / invisibly visible
/ loudly silent /
an unsent letter sealed in blood

JULIET COOK

After the Lite Brite Died

1.

Sometimes I'm not in the mood for light hearted.
Sometimes I'm not in the mood for light.
Sometimes I'd rather sit by myself in the dark.

Sometimes I only want the Lite Brite colors to be dark
red like a rare moon, red like the blood
that will make you back away from this
girl turning into a woman who will not
keep her own red flow a secret anymore.

2.

When I was a little girl, I was scared of my own blood
and anything getting close to it. I couldn't stop
scratching mosquito bites and ruining my legs.
My mom slapped me with a wooden spoon
as punishment for making my girl legs ugly
with my own undisciplined fingers.

My fingers just wouldn't hide themselves
under the covers, just couldn't stop drawing
more attention to the red bites all over my legs.
I couldn't stop making myself even bloodier.
Crying in bed as I stained another sheet
even though I knew this would lead to more punishment.

3.

When I was a little girl, I was terrified of leeches,
those big worm shapes with unspeaking mouths
that secretly stuck to the flesh and sucked the blood out.
My best friend said it could not be pulled out
without fire. It used to be my own body, but now
it belonged to the leech. He showed me the holes

in the ground where the bloodsuckers lived, just waiting.
He told me about the medicinal leeches and how
they could be placed inside my holes too.
He whispered in my ear that my vagina was a trapdoor for a leech
and that leech would expand as it filled itself up
with more and more and more of my blood.

4.
When I was a little girl, I was scared of ocean water
because what if I drowned? Even if I learned to swim,
I still couldn't see what lived underneath. Jaws
and huge shark teeth and little mouths with sharp teeth.
He said the piranhas would turn me into nothing
but bones that broke and sank all the way down.

I kept sinking down and down and down, losing
my own vision, losing my own blood flow.
They all wanted to tell me it was my fault.
They all want to tell me I'm twisting this
but the way I feel is that
they're the ones who kept twisting me
around and around and around until I snapped.

5.
I was scared of my own flesh and blood and what might be hiding
inside me, what might be hiding in the dark recesses, just waiting.
Until it finally contracted and broke its way out.

Until my mind soared into its own dark red blood bath.
Until there was no more hiding my torrential uprising of blood.
Until there was no more silencing my own contorted flow.
I flung the lying snake across the room.
I spit the hissing soap out of my mouth
and allowed my own words to come out.

MAGDALENA BALL

Everything is Energy

The shore like memory
breaks into grey
your eyes always wavering

I see that blur
the ink you bleed into my skin
a sailboat on the water
a plasma vortex
vibrating into time

I held a shaking hand above my brow
tried to see your body in that mist
your voice came back as wind

I removed all clothes
shivered in the stillness of dusk
a discrete frequency

I know you've changed state
like a lost blood sister
here at the edge of light

I feel the electromagnetic field
our hearts beating in sync

broken bodies flailing
against the illusion of death.

TANIS MACDONALD

Little River

O little red river beside
the big blue lake
O stream O stain on the back of
white shorts

Red Rover Red Rover we call you over

O leakage of luck, your own private Idunno
O village of scarlet spillage O your date a boy
who sang red bum red bum did you sit in berries
O little red river without a padded raft

Red Rover Red Rover you've spilled all over

O the look you shot him
(so much depends upon the red river
glazed with pain, daughter
beside the bright chicas)
O curse him beside the big lake and sign
in blood as long as grass is green and red
rivers run until they don't
O ovaries become overies

Red Rover Rover you are now O ver

O very very O
O change as a good as arrest
O Icarus the boy who could
not stand the heat
O pos O neg
O my stars and little river fishes

GRACE ARENAS

The First Condition

Nosebleed, erection—
 it all has to go somewhere.
The communists are decorating,
 and euphemism is just poetry
 that everybody likes.
Hollow dresses hanging
 in the closet. Unpicked
 clovers in the yard—
if this keeps up, can I never take
 ballet lessons, and if I never
 take ballets lessons, will I ever
learn to French kiss? Matters
 of course. Teething on air.
Talking of Fates' tapestry,
what kind of string were they using?
 Spiders webbing diamonds out,
 a quilt, a cross stitch, woman's work.
Smaller thimbles. Shredded nests.
 It all has to go if this keeps up,
 every clip-on earring.
Why take up more space than this?
 Thread me through tree branches,
 a speck, a slip of a thing,
 bird-narrow. As light. Aloft.

Recovery Room

Tell me, as you scrawl with a Sharpie
just left of my hip, will you be sure
to mind your stitches? I would hate
to be left leaking, a punctured tire,
cracked mason jar of sea water.
Would like to keep the majority
of myself. I wonder even whether
this suffocated ovary should have
stayed in place; it may have held my
conviction about the purpose of acorns
or some other heart-deep thing.
And now a biohazard. Strange how
we can break down and shrivel in turn.
How you harvested a walnut. You've
cut so much now, told me afterwards
that I lost barely any blood at all.
And I want all the blood I can get,
so I thank you. I want the plasma
that makes my eyes twitch, the platelets
that make me laugh when he sneezes.
Careful with those forceps, they are pressing

LAUREN BULLOCK

Pork Chops

Earlier this week I told you I left
five pounds of pork chops
soaking in blood and thawed ice,
a puddle of probable rot

the way the lovers before you
sunk their bicuspid into want,
no chewing while they waited out
the growth of their manes.

How when I woke up to the raw
stew I saw nothing to salvage,
days' worth of bones and fat
and food thrown away. Now

I do not cry in your arms
in the kitchen for either waste;
my mind has learned to gristle
better than it brines. The reasons

are all forgettable, only
that my heart was sad
warm meat, and yours
forgiving of thoughtless slaughter.

E. KRISTIN ANDERSON

Quartz glittering, ghostly

Alien to ashes, dusted hands,
I've placed years

down on a trick, flustered,
hysterics in a glass house.

I take instinct, that snarl,
and suit the feel to me,

a light out the final touch.

Right down you send in
whole violets, sugar

at the stoplight, trouble
at the sudden silence

that echoed up through years
like blood itself: Scrub,

scrub,
scrub.

THIS IS AN ERASURE POEM. SOURCE MATERIAL: KING, STEPHEN. *CARRIE*.
NEW YORK: ANCHOR, 2011. 22-26. PRINT.

CONTRIBUTORS

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