

Threadbare

Poems by Rook Reilly

I. Scar Tissue

Controlled Burns

In the shower.

Water kneads tissue / twist to red

Steam invades bone / twist to red

Relief ecstatic / twist to red

Body flinches / twist to red

Everything lulls

all the oxygen is Trapped

in an Inch

of the Room

At the sink.

Soupy glass.

Is that me? I sometimes can't tell.

It doesn't look like me / twist to blue.

scrub the oxygen

away

Look at those

Frigid red-rimmed eyes

There. That's me.

Shadow / Puppet

You led me
out of the cave
smug and thrilled
and pointed to the sun

Revealing it to me
like it was yours

You always loved to enlighten me
but didn't warn that it would hurt
wanted me to feel
a certain way, I suppose

You think yourself
this Liberator
sold me a brave new world
and then left

My eyes hadn't settled
I never got a good look
not at you

I see everything so clearly now
Every wicked line and pore
all harsh and sharp

I know why you called my name
back in the dark, you called me
Convinced me

My Confession:
I have wanted to feel it, too
Control

I think I have spent every moment since
chasing, vulture wings spread

circling it

How long were you alone?
Before you Saved me
Was I the first? The only?
Selfishly, I don't want to be
Selfishly, I do

I pretend I don't want to know.

I still find myself waiting
for you to come back
and show me

How do I fix it?
Put me
back Together

Where did you stow the rest of me?

Barcodes

summer
checkout stand
3.90 4.68 15.80 9.99
beep beep beep

she's worked here longer
i scan
i notice
arms hands legs
she scans

locker room
uniforms on
uniforms off
she notices
scans
thighs hips stomach

eyes on floor
on lockers
anything but skin
we don't talk

until we do
first, in coded phrases.
styro catscratch barcodes

barcodes—
funny.
we scan all day
barcodes
now, each other

uniforms on
uniforms off
painted sheets
fingers tracing

scanning
lines
white pink red
lines
she scans me
i scan her

what's my value?
what's my value?
what's my value?
what's my value?

beep beep beep

(de)composition

i needed a self portrait so i painted a picture of a corpse and i wrote a poem about the worms and i sang a song about the dirt, and no matter what i made, it always turned out dead and ugly and i wondered why i couldn't find a word to describe this feeling. making something out of yourself and watching as it rots and realizing that it's all you. you're burying yourself. spade and cadaver. next time, i say, it'll come out right. next time, i'll be good.

we're made in the image of god.

okay.

do we disgust him?

II. Insomniacs

Just in the other room

I catch your voice from here
At least, I think it's you
The boys sound like you in recent years
Through the drywall
the exhaustion is Loud
Ah, yes
You.

I cry every time I think of it.

Eden

In our old shared bedroom Mom has framed
a soft pastel picture of those bible verses
“Love is patient, Love is kind”

Each “love” framed by a flower wreath
“Love does not envy” roses
“Love does not boast” lilies

Those might’ve been the first words I ever read.
counting love, instead of sheep.

I lay in the now-guest bed, staring at the wall
at the picture, and new wreaths bloom

love is racing up the back path through the sprinklers
love is picking out the gravel from your knees
love is fighting over the front seat of the van
love is apologizing with a tuna sandwich on wheat
love is when you drove me to the dollar movie every week
love is sharing a six-dollar mix of sprite and lemonade
love is unplugging the tv since i never win this stupid game
love is begging you to beat the water temple for me
love is torturing the cat at the piano with our opera
love is you keeping all of my playbills
love is lending me your ipod shuffle while i mow the lawn
love is spells and potions in the backyard out of dandelions

When you’re in the garden
you think only of the growing pains.
Of what’s outside.
All you want is to leave.

Now
with more love to count than can be held
All I want is to go back.

State of Malaise

Do not walk me through this desert.
You will not find me
some shade.

I do not belong.
I do not belong.

This sunsick glaze
will die with me.

I cannot stay.
I cannot stay.

Grief is a spiral / I forgot how to love

Grief is a spiral, an endless
creeping molasses

I forgot how to love, and I'm
angry with you.

Grief is a spiral, clutching
down and in, endless space to
go

I forgot how to love, and it
feels like I deserve it.

Grief is a spiral. Every time it
comes back 'round the corner,
I almost catch your eye

I forgot how to love you
when it mattered. I'm sorry.

Grief is a spiral. It barely
moves. It doesn't run. It
won't stop staring.

I forgot how to love, it's all
because of you. All that was
left was you. Then nothing.

Grief is a spiral, a black hole
that's stolen the air.

I forgot how to love, and
you're not here to teach me.

Grief is a spiral and this time
I'll jump, just around the
bend, get off this track.

I forgot how to love. Maybe I
never knew how. Would you
have let me know?

Grief is a spiral and it's
winding tighter.

I forgot how to love.

Grief is a spiral.

I forgot to love.

Grief is a spiral.

I forgot love.

I forgot love.
Grief is a spiral.

I love.

Grief is a spiral.

I love.

Grief is a spiral

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Grief is

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The Passenger

I am no longer myself.
This person walks
Away with my life.
On, and on.

And I am left behind,
at the terminal

III. Exodus

Testimonies

It hit me at breakfast when he spoke to me.
He noted that he'd recently been outside late at night.
That he'd seen the full moon.
"It's beautiful," he said.
"It's so bright, it's kind of like day"
"If you ever get the chance, you should see a full moon."

Imagine if you were the first person to look at the moon.
To recognize her beauty.
That you were outside the cave, telling the rest to come out.

Men want to feel as though they have given you a
Profound Realization
But I've seen the moon.
What more?
What more?

Transgressions

One falls and the other follows,
so the story goes.
Eve falls before Adam.
Orpheus follows Eurydice (*down*).

And here we lay,
at Eden's edge.
Eyes unopened (*fruit untasted*),
she, my Eurydice—and I, her Eve.

this isn't how the story goes,
serpent in our midst, but no adam, no orpheus.

what happens to us?
if it bites her, if it tempts me?
what happens to us, then, in this bed?

i guess
if we fall
 (*face-to-face, hand-in-hand, rib-to-rib*) together,
if we fall
 (*into this bed, out of the garden, in love*) as one,

we won't need to be followed.

who said paradise is a place?
maybe it's a person. maybe it's her.

Invocations

I sit in the bedroom chair of a
bare apartment
with my father's hands
on my head
in holy prayer.

He confers his "father's blessing" to me
through his righteous priesthood power.

My Mother kneels at my bed
listening intently to god's voice
through Her vessel-husband.

There is no such thing as a Mother's blessing—
She has no authority to speak on god's behalf
so She listens
to hear god's will
to hear what god has to say
about my life. my future. me
I listen, too.

Not to hear the words of a god.
I listen to play the part of the
believer so I can hear my father say it

Your father
~~in heaven~~
knows you

Your father
~~in heaven~~
is proud of you

Your father
~~in heaven~~
loves you

They are about to leave
and my Mother plants a kiss
on my head

I am proud of you
I love you

She says.

Revelations

you'd fallen asleep
right in the middle of our conversation and i
had half a mind to wake you
up i wanted to
force you
to be a better listener or
impress upon you your
impoliteness

but as i
listened
to your soft breathing the
rising and
falling of your chest
barely visible under the the single wick candle
i let you sleep

and like a sunrise
or growing embers
a realization
bloomed

"i love you"
i whispered to you
sound asleep

and the
candle and the
stars and the
moon and the
fireflies

all whispered it back
over and over

(i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you, i love you, i love you,)
i love you, i love you, i love you,)