

Incineration #2

It's an autumn of incineration.
I rake in my mistakes like poker chips, silver dollars.
My defects appear in colors there are no names for-----
aubergine, amaretto, amaranth, maize, flame.
In gutters of damp leaves the brittle residue
of lilies like shrill orchids, broken bird eggs,
hollow ovals of abandoned nests finches left.

This is why terminals and bridges fascinate.
The depot. The pier. The space station.

Meanwhile, the river falls.
Stones know too much.
The whisper of berries and moss
and promises that snap like iced branches,
marrow leaking out.

I call my lies tributaries.
I think myself an ocean.

I articulate the fluid center, its separate elements.
First chalk, a subdued harbor, a woman taking tea
from a porcelain cup. She's thinking of avalanches,
riots and the implausibility of sanctuary.
That's what women do beside swimming pools
and lagoons. Do you presume they actually read
Vanity Fair and consider fashion?

It's an autumn of approximation and half-truths.
Words curl and disappear and then there's a coin
behind your ear. Applause like an elongated echo
or the screams of air passengers as they fall 37,000 feet.

I navigate the zone where lies meet
and mate in hierarchies of gray.
How little of winter is really white,
what with rock salt and stain
and acres of maples wind rips off.
Rape is an act of celebration.

The leaves, of course, keep falling.
I listen to their spines crack, each vertebrae
distinct and extinguished. Then the anatomy
of acorns, their ribbed architecture, engraved,

ornamental. They might be Chinese hats
or religious texts in an obscure script.

I have survived to mid-autumn.
It's a surprise.
Insomnia is yellow in all seasons.
It's surreal that I'm here at all.

Beyond lawns of severed oak in a dust
of snow like a layer of smoke
trees rise like cathedrals in frail sun.

We are the last outpost, one icy night
rain from collapse.

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