

POETRY
\$12

"Valluzzi controls her line like a spider. The hungrier she is, or the lonelier, the more exquisite her cadence. From branch to beam to comet, this poet measures mortality by space and not by time. Men on choppers, women in night skies, lovers wearing wax suits...none of us are safe from the kiss of this eight-legged poet."

BARRETT WARNER, FREE STATE REVIEW

"It is easy to pick up *Part With Never*; difficult though to put it down. Hauntingly nuanced with a timbre which cuts to the heart, Valluzzi paints a portrait of a woman torn . . .

ANTHONY C. HAYES, BALTIMORE POST-EXAMINER

PART WITH NEVER

CARLAJEAN VALLUZZI

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KITCHEN
TABLE
PRESS

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In the deeps there is a little bird
and it only hums, it hums of fortitude . . .

FRANK O'HARA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WHY I'M DRAWN TO THE STING

Down the red deck steps
at the rear of his mother's house I'd run.

Swung up against the sissy bar, we rode
through scenes I later dreamt about

on the back of an ancient Harley
driven by instincts to manufacture memories.

Beyond the vast vegetable garden,
over the expanse of browned grass,

the stage curtain of scrub pines
had long since been left open.

For hours we'd circumscribe paths
between branches, often flushing out galliformes.

The stacked white towers stood
tall, sentinels by the stream.

Seen again, it seemed I had forgotten them.
He'd cut the engine so I could hear

the hum; their strife—it seemed a comfort,
a lesson in the necessity of fear.

He'd gently lift the lid, explain the difference
between a worker and a drone as a few left home.

Deeper in, the mountain laurel blooming.
I hadn't yet the compulsion to hide a smile.

My fingers never quite met
at the front of his chest then.

Sundown signaled tears,
the wonder if this time would be the last.

Not for nothing; my own mother
would soon excise him with surgical precision.

Years later I still feel the phantom
muffler melt the rubber of my sneaker.

HAZY

The city's been a hostage to this heat,
a mistress who's impossible to please.
Citizens swelter, they're already beat;
thirteen days above one hundred degrees.

At the call of the catbird on the rail
I close my eyes: again I'm on the shore,
prevailing winds distribute a gull's wail.
The moment doesn't require something more.

The breakers beat a baseline on the sand,
again drawn by an invisible net.
I float on my back, deaf to your demand,
confessing what the water will forget.

The salt is on my tongue now even still.
I lull with elbows bent upon the sill.

ELECTRA LOST

75 years later,
what do they want with
searching the deep off
the reef? Who cares
American unguents
have been found?

If they really are her bones
let them stay in the ground.

AWASH

Who can say how long it's been
since that wild dervish,

that bitch of a cyclops,
first touched land.

Neither the Bahamas nor Florida
were good enough.

As large as her loneliness
she churned, gathered strength.

Too long out on the sea,
one eye opening, widening in search,

swallowing heaving gulps
of the Gulf and raining them down

again on Atlanta, the tips
of Alabama and Mississippi

before those lights,
the echo of strolling brass.

Hungry for something else,
she had consumed too much,

didn't feel the guilt we wanted
her to, raged on still unsatisfied;

curling her fingers up
through the bible belt, she reached

for Lake Erie which washed
silently out of her grasp.

PITY WHAT BORES

She calls herself a supernova,
builds in false intensities
unaware of how that story ends.

There is a better word;
stars will be born and die
before she can name it.

There is no catching up
to a comet. It is ill advised
to try and grab hold of the tail.

Density cannot be measured
by the removal of parts;
honesty elusive, not impossible.

URBAN DEMORALIZATION

I chose abandon,
never favored the familiar.

I can't find a river to listen;

these kids throw whiskey bottles
instead of stones to decompress.

The stars continue to hibernate.

Plastic bags stow away
on the updrafts of ravens.

Home won't stay.

I skirt strangers,
file away physical descriptions,

still think I see you around.

NOT THE FIRST TO SUFFER

Catching bees
in a broken jar,
you only hear yourself

humming, delighted by
the imminence of stings.

Warnings tangle within
the barbed wire fence,
pile beneath the maple.

Put on the blinders again,
it's easier to sleep than to dream.

Your grief has been patient
asking for our wings,
has lost the autumnal lethargy.

Remove the redundancy. As free
as we offer ourselves up,

pluck each wing away;
better to be dead,
just barely out of reach.

SUIT OF WAX

Plumb the line.
Set a single
cedar shingle adrift
on the innermost ring
of concentrics;
watch it push,
lead itself away.

You have no
suit of armor,
what good is one
of wax?

AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

Open the window
to feel a breeze that isn't;
nothing crosses here
but arms and shafts,
not unlike arms, of light
leaked over wide pine.

If only for an hour
then at least each day.

EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A RAINSTORM

a house can be consumed,
I have seen now this is true.

Those bricks didn't burn
away completely,
only charred

from the inside out;
walls fell away.
Flames contained within

rose from floor to ceiling
to floor again,
destroyed everything:

metal
 and wood
and wiring.

Black smoky lashes
peeking out
from under sashes,

batting coyly at disaster
reached for rooftops
where the stranded,

amidst streaming water,
awaited the inevitable:
to be entombed,

an eternal kind of rescue.

CARDINAL LAMENT

Her calves
maps of rivers

that never reach the sea.
To find the treasure

was to travel north
to that valley

a well without water,
once a constant spring.

Pretty words
for ugly things

never quite convey
the meaning right.

Without a compass
we are adrift,

remember the difference
between one and the same.

There can be only one
true magnetic;

alas, no longer
drawn to you.

LOVERS LAPSE

We float through doorways
of an empty house,
all lead from nothing into the same.

Neglected postage, passions;
reduced reflections,
glints off picture frame glass.

You pass, leave only a cool draft,
no longer a relief.
I close my mouth before I've opened it.

THITHERWARD

Displaced as the moon in daylight,
we drive on.

Half of you is hidden.
The radio is low, abandoning

forgotten violins into
thickening air.

The sun follows, reluctant, lost
as well along this road.

I left a cipher to linger
ten miles back;

it evaporated before
you thought to look up.

NO NEEDLES NECESSARY

Cells knit themselves
into something so much more,
mere weeks before the recognizable
undeniables start to show;

we teeter above no net,
verge stretched
between this exact &
a euphemism: “Too Much”.

Still, I laugh again
recall the first time
touch myself
with the thought of you.

A TRICK OF TWILIGHT

I thought I saw you
walking from where
gray sand turns black;

the sea lapses over itself,
reluctantly leans back
against insistent foam.

I thought I saw you:
freshly trimmed hair.
Clock hands bent slack.

The whitecaps ferry home belief
as expertly sheens crack,
built up left unfinished.

FECUNDITY : FUTILITY

Stand, with
pitchfork poised;
tend our patch of lime.
Imagine a shoot
actually makes it,
tendrils children's fingers
reaching beyond this wall,
stones which have kept both
Out and In.

Allow yourself this in spite
of our only real use lying
in the whitening of sails,
useless in this landlock
where only surrender
is the only consistent wave.
Watered with wasted tears
they will know, to begin,
they are no good.

I touch the sun,
diffuse in the gray light.
Whispers belong to neither of us.
The mockingbird sings your
always the same song.
You insist on closing your eyes, again.

A THOUSAND SWEET WHISPERS

I

mother

of

raw head

languid honey

incubate a knife

will sit rip

my sordid gown

heave moons

blow their ships

about the lake

why swim still

urge no flood

dream of milk

sweat over smooth meats

shake winter

from the

enormous

tongue

a forest would

read the sea &

part with never

AN EASIER FAITH

He's up there; a ring of
wiry gray laid flat
around that planetarium,

peering over bifocals he
embroiders the staging
each night.

Hunched, revolving,
stitching constellations
into the weft, weaving sleep—

a widening net
the unlucky are lucky enough
not to slip through—

over the valley, the roofs
over sleeping,
ricocheting from dream to dream,

remembered
if only for a second,
upon waking.

IN THIS MOMENT

I think of you,
thread the
tiniest eye
cold-rimmed in steel
with a length of golden lash;

pass it through
the wooden hoop,
taut royal blue.
Each twinkling stitch
ties itself to above,
a final wish.

IN THE DRIVEWAY

I walk the wire methodically,
in and out between,
parcel attentions equally.
The rust flakes;
a cough, a memory.

Early morning cross town,
the basement never locked.
The briefest hesitation left to lean,
a casual wall; the smell:
old wood in the stairwell.

Silence struggles
passed across the pillowcase.
Reckless abandon the only alternative
to the cluttered head
in the empty room.

PUT IT BEHIND YOU

Tonight my foyer smells
like the top of your head, or
your sheets when they weren't
so fresh; I remember yesterday
today, having held so long
the end of a twisting rope, have
begun to fray as well.
They say bereft, we fall
crepe paper confetti
along the river's meniscus.
We shine bright enough to illuminate spectacles;
they congratulate each other
when we leave no trace.

THE MINUTES OF THE AFTERNOON WERE LIKE BRIGHT MIRRORS*

I could see the reflection
in your eye, my
slightly curving right
from the waist,
leaning toward you
yet looking almost away.

I saw everything in them
both and in each one
alone: your eyes
fell at once, drawn shades
in an empty room.

Thumbs and forefingers
formed the mouths of hungry birds,
filled their beaks with pink flesh,
set aloft upon thermals
generated by oiled feathers
and songs disguised as whispers.

Each button on the blouse
a boulder to you
until at last the fabric parted,
imparting the only secret
you've managed to keep thus far.

*from THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING, Carson McCullers

ANOTHER MAGICIAN DEPARTS

He packs up
his illusions;
the carnival leaves
behind
by the same road
it came.

Having been ridden
night after night,
now naked, stripped
of bodies and light
the Ferris wheel becomes

a windmill
in a field empty of anything
save the discarded
flotsam of the
temporarily
distracted.

Bees busy themselves
about a cola can,
not asking too much
only to serve
some purpose there.

POEM FOR A MAN TRAPPED

You fall

through the same holes every night.
Universal Compromise lets you in,
tries to sneak you past
beneath their shadows;

all can see you,

walking on your hands for her;
always falling, never free.
Without fail, waiting out each darkness
at the same coordinates.

NOTHING PRESENTS

A broken windmill,
in spite of yourself
you spin, creak
through your same
sad circles, grind
each year
between your worn
soft stones.

ANOTHER TEMPEST

Trains bisect the hemispheres
at sunset. This opera of Baltimore
continuous, staged around me

its score written in the ravens
on the wires crisscrossing the Amtrak
beneath the highway.

I struggle with the net, but cast librettos wide
exhale, swallow them back again
whole; they taste, then, of somewhere else.

This morning no longer yours, or mine,
retains ghosts of dreams
we have acquiesced.

I linger here gathering dust,
a paper spiral above a heat wave,
supplicant to centuries of perpetual emotion.

The smell of a storm arrives first.
The back of the swaddled tongue receives
the tiptoe taste of wet asphalt.

A WORM FINDS THE WINDFALL

We used to swing
ropes over limbs,

swing bodies out
over fast waters, but

we always swung back,
fit foot to slick rock.

Now my feet fail too
far from your funeral.

I let city stones fall
from my palm

as they bury you
in Abenaki topsoil.

AQUACADE

You mistook me for dead,
set me alight, adrift
as I had requested without
holding your wrist to my lips,
misremembering basic first aid.

You watched, the waves carried
me on their backs, so swift
that by the time I cried out
I had long since cleared the slips;
swimming, I followed the trail the moon laid.

You turned and conceded,
I felt the moment shift:
currents of doubt curdled 'round me
I sank in a last eclipse,
became salt, a fiery aquacade.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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