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tetanus // Celestial Bitch // feast

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tetanus

we saunter through
the suburbs i wish to be reborn into,
glass rattling in our pockets & purses. she is the only one who knows i hate my mother,
yet she cares very little.

what i think of her now doesn't matter.
under that blue evening we are
a single *thing*,
jangling with adrenaline
as it passes through summer-glazed yards.

it trespasses, briefly.
my shoe seizes the fence—
i dive, retrieve—
skin catches—i swear i have tetanus.

someone i swore i could love had a needle driven through their arm two weeks ago. i
waited by the phone as if they gave a damn, as if my digital affirmations would release
them from some divine bacterial will.
my own scratch is long, thin. deep as an eraser shaving. i nurse it like a bullet hole,
tear through her cabinets to find bandages for a wound that doesn't even
bleed.

i don't drink. she does.
when i'm finally satisfied with my medical hand she's vomiting
in the kitchen sink. it is 8 p.m. & my friends surround her like apostles.
i part the hormonal crowd. turn on the faucet.

they leave.

cherry punch sinks into her mother's carpet.

i'm kneeling with my wounded leg as i scrub.

the red spot turns to white. i've never been more proud.

i climb the stairs to see that someone with another.

i am not surprised.

i am sixteen, sure yet flimsy, betting on an underlying flaw

which will make sense of all this. that the talents i harbor

in notdrinking & stainremoving

will amount to a whole kind of love.

& some time later

i will realize that i did get tetanus;

it slithered through me that night, an internal leech, curving my hips into something

worth loving, instilling in me the desire to be desired,

no longer craving

a whole love but the surface of it: a pool of glass under my bare feet.

they will follow me, trailing my intrigue. that someone will call me first. i will receive enough love to fill an open wound.

Celestial Bitch

I use stars as a talking point at parties.
Not that they're dead, everyone knows that.
I talk about Orion and Cassiopeia
like I know them personally
& light pollution & the constellations I think I can see.
Did you know that Venus is the brightest planet?
Of course you do, but you play
into my game lest you spend
an evening with just you &
your hands.

I note your reactions,
bury them between my legs,
expose my rotting tongue,
force your return.
You can call me a bitch, I don't mind.
You're at your most attractive
when coerced into hostility,
calling me like I am
so I don't have to call myself.

I revel in it,
brand myself:
bitch when asleep,
bitch when awake,
bitch when dead.
I want to be the bitch

that rocks the cradle,
the hand that slaps your previous notions,
Tuesday bitch who studies until morning
and flaunts herself at night,

midnight bitch,
dreary as I open my mouth
& cough myself up
like an oversized pill;
& when you look down on me
your vision will throb
with darting eyes &
upturned lips swollen
from kissing myself in the mirror.

My favorite bitch
you'll think,
my favorite means to an end;
celestial bitch
who knows all the right words to say
& planets to discuss.

feast

he waits patiently, a hound: heaving, stirring,
warming my body with contrived breath.
saliva pools where porcelain meets skin.
i am chicken liver with a beating heart and undone buttons:
nubile nightmare in crusted pink lipstick.

his plate is sterile and serene, trimmed with rope
dripping merlot along exposed thighs.
i'm twitching with expectancy, shivering
and aware of gelatin flesh wrapped in a bow—
easter dinner madonna, the icon i've become.

with knife and fork he dines, ignoring
the steam building atop my taped mouth,
broiling skin, like strawberry jam, nails pinching, pulling;
teeth against flushed neck, hands reaching into dry throat:
daylight surrendering to disarray.

yet i am
gamy and determined
to make my flesh useful.

i am
a good beast.

i am
the night in its prime
serving my lone purpose:

girl

in curls
and knee-highs,

pleasing you

while i dissolve

into the floorboards
and come

of age

into cold hands

raising body parts

like children