Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jennifer Bradpiece: Three Poems

Jennifer Bradpiece · Monday, March 14th, 2022

One Through Ten

Doctor,

Your question,
my chronic pain.
My answer,
at your request, 1-10.

But first, tell me
1-10: how much you love
each of your children?

1-10: how much you would miss your sibling
versus your spouse?

1-10: how you would order
your senses?
Lose the wild raspberry and amber
spray of sunset, versus
the scent of your newborn’s skin?

1-10: where your passions fall?
Your successes, your failures,
your dreams?

I am not sure, at all, Doctor,
you understand the weight
1-10 implicates—the hidden
balances, agendas, the compensatory scales.

If I were to tell you
that the way down is deep,
the sinking long,
and you won’t make the next narrow pass
without two oars,
Doctor, which one would you choose?

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The Urge to Make Things Ugly

Slices shards of amber glass through fleshy toes in sparkling sand
Pries the legs off fuzzy green caterpillars
Scrapes a chiffon scarf down the peeling paint of an alley wall
Drives rusty nails into polished rosewood
Loosens salt caps on immaculately set tables
Scuffs tarry streaks across a freshly mopped floor
Clamps teeth tightly around tin foil
Knows you know exactly how it feels
Shatters the crystal vase of roses against a vanity mirror
Bites a manicured cuticle until the hangnail bleeds
Smears lipstick the color of clotted blood
Claws silk stockings over long pale thighs
Jams a new stiletto heel against the concrete floor
Spills red wine across white linens
Teeters over to the three-legged desk
Perches on an empty corner
Never gets invited back

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Thirteenth Floor

I sweep my hand down
across the string section
of telephone wires.
A few bird notes fly out
as a dusk tone settles
the city beneath me.
Lit and drunk on a roof top
of a twelve-story building
that is not my own,
the slice of city
below is an orchestra pit
I might fall into.
Imagine that sound —
each building’s face an industrial
grand piano, tilted sideways —
the alternating dark and florescent
windows are keys I might slide across,
skin staccato against their cold
metal frames. I’m so high,
and high up, leaning over
the brick edge, I could melt
into the street music.
Toy horn section of tiny cars,

cymbal crash of construction metal,
an oboe pitch of moon clears its throat
through the blushing saxophone sky.
The clouds, a purple treble,
puffed out copper edges.
Twilight deepens—a baritone drone bagpipe
flannel falling in measured tartan tones.
I long to scale the octaves,
so high but pulled to float low,
conduct this urban symphony
in flight, tuning fork bones vibrate
as the bell of my beer bottle rings
against the roof’s rim.
I stretch my torso over the edge
of the pit, want to lose all my selves,
break the fourth wall, open my lips
to the mouthpiece, throat hungry
for reed, and stroke my spine
across the gathering violin-bowed
strain of night.
If my legs slide over
I could hold the wood,
strum fingers against
the nylon gut between staccato stars,
tend the glass harp, angel organ,
dive into this seraphim sea
through the crescendo
nearly over the edge.

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Ophelia on Acid by Jennifer Bradpiece

To purchase *OPHELIA ON ACID* by Jennifer Bradpiece

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