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Rebecca Schumejda: Three Poems

Rebecca Schumejda · Thursday, August 3rd, 2017

Rebecca Schumejda is the author of *Waiting at the Dead End Diner* (Bottom Dog Press, 2014), *Cadillac Men* (NYQ Books, 2012), *Falling Forward*, (sunnyoutside, 2009); *The Map of Our Garden* (verve bath, 2009); *Dream Big Work Harder* (sunnyoutside press 2006); and several other chapbooks. Her forthcoming collection *Our-One Way Street* is forthcoming from NYQ Books. She received her MA in Poetics and Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and her BA from SUNY New Paltz. Currently, she resides in New York's Hudson Valley. These poems are part of a new collection she is working on about the impact of mental illness and tragedy.

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The Admission of Light

When I look through windows, I think of my brother, not because I want to,
but because someone who lived here before us painted the windows shut.

Most people don't talk about him anymore. They want to forget.
I wished he killed himself more than once; this is my admission of guilt;

please forgive me for this. All of the men who live with him say
they didn't do it. A window is an appeal, they want to crawl out through.

When I lock doors behind me, I don't feel safe. What is inside can be
more dangerous. I want you to understand this could happen to you.

All of the men who live with him hate how their shadows can leave, but
their bodies can't. They sharpen shivs and wait. Sunlight coming through

windows are shackles around his wrists and ankles, the reflection of light,
the slow shuffle back into life after the unthinkable. I want to stop thinking

about what will happen to him. The men he lives with miss curtains. When
it's dark, I think of the womb we shared, of him in his cell, counting down

days, about the woman he loved, the woman he killed while drunken and

psychotic. Glass. God. Guilt. All the birds colliding with endless sky.

Three Days in March

On lockdown for three days while cells are tossed
a knight, a rook, two kings and a queen crushed
under the guards' boots. Through bared window,
he watches the blizzard. When we were kids we
lived on a hill and in winter we went sledding even
after all the snow melted off the trail. We'd come
home muddy and tired. Now icing cupcakes for my
youngest daughter's second birthday, vanilla
frosting dissolves over warm chocolate cake.

If only we knew how to wait. She'll be twenty-three
at his earliest possible release date. When the grief
counselor told my mother she should get out more,
she didn't mean during a snow emergency.

But I have no bread, no eggs, no milk, no reason to live.
Seventy-two hours inside making crafts—painting pasta
noodles and stringing them around our necks, cutting
credit card offer snowflakes, thinking of him locked up
makes me impatient. Once my brother told me
You can't imagine what can be made with ordinary items.

Roller-coaster

for J.

As soon as we start moving,
your hands tighten around
the safety bar.
You can't recite the alphabet
or count to ten yet,
but now you can say
you've survived a roller-coaster.
Your mom should be here,
but she is dead.
Your dad should be here,
but he is awaiting trial.
By default, I'm here,
assuaged by your body
crashing into mine

as we're flung around each corner.
Later, we will eat funnel cake,
play the ring toss,
joke about how you kept
one eye open during the entire ride.

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