

THESE LATEST
Apocalypses

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ARTEIDOLIA
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New York

*To my mother & sister:
Without you, I wouldn't be here to write these poems.*

*And to Alex Woolner:
Thank you for being my coffee-mate.*

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My window wears a mask

My open kitchen window takes long, deep breaths
Through its mask material, then rests,
Longing for the next moment
When I will close it off
To shelter in place
Or places hidden now
In the broad outside
Skies of blue
Tangled with
white.

Urchin

We spent the afternoon laughing,
As we Slipped and stumbled over the rocks along the Central
Coast.
Every few seconds, we stopped
To smash purple sea urchin with scuba hammers.

On the rocks
They shattered like tea cups
Leaving blobs of yellow-orange flesh to mark our path.

Flocks of seabirds joined our peregrination
Scoters, Loons, Grebes and shouting Gulls
Dashed from kill to kill
Feasting on the remains.

There was simple joy in it.
We competed to see who could cull the most
Promised dinner to the winner.

When the sun grew too hot
We stripped off our clothes,
Left them scattered along the shore
And dove into the waves.

We should have met a kelp forest.
Gently swinging blades and stems.
Schools of Garibaldi and Yellowtail.
Octopi with questioning eyes.

Instead there were just more urchins.
They have taken the forests.
They stretched out to the horizon.

Unit 268

To whom it may concern,

I left you this poem tucked into the padlock on my storage unit, which I lost today.

I hope when you find it, you don't stop to read these words before cutting through the shackle. Use your bolt cutters to cut this poem so its locking pawl is useless, and its lock body falls clattering to the asphalt. Kick it aside with your instep into the shadows laced with fluorescent light cast by the planter filled with coke bottles, used gum, and three flowers.

For Maria, who cleans the building,

I am sorry to have littered this poem. I know that too much of your time is spent dealing with the mess left by others. If you can do me a favor and tear what you find in half, putting one half into the trash bag, but rolling the rest between your palms into a tight ball that you throw over the back fence into the afternoon, I would be grateful.

I know this is asking a lot, considering every time you saw me, I forced you to ask me for the late rent. We both knew I had no intention of paying.

Dear Puppet,

When you find this wadded ball of poetry during your daily trip through the alley on your daughter's bike, take a moment to forgive me for not coming back, then tear this poem in half.

I know you will want to chew both halves to make double sure it can't be read again, like you did on the yard a thousand times, but please let the Santa Ana winds take one half away before you do what you do with the other.

To you, dearest Santa Ana Winds,
I hope this poem finds you well, and that you will be gentle with
us this year because no matter what they say, or if they call you
a devil wind after yet another wildfire,
I will always love you.

With love,
The Former Owner of Unit 268

Wood Parts Earth

Post holes mile upon mile
Connected by borders of steel frames
Grown in the soil of distrust
Protecting no one here
From the rumored dreams
Of no one there.
Boundaries
Standing
Still.

Ants
Gathered
Under trees
With a broken
Twig you found behind
The home team dugout bench
Then kept in a glass test tube
I carried with me in the sky
Tied in my hopes for a better life.

To the Witnesses

I'm not the hero of my story for surviving it
At best I was another witness to it

There are people who saw most of my addiction for what it was
–My own private apocalypse–

My breaking.

Those witnesses saw the hurried yellow lines
where I glued myself together every day
So I could break in new and different places.

They could not have seen my smallest still cherished moments
The flutter of drying laundry out the train window as I left
Union Station

The reds, yellows, and pinwheeling metallic sunlight on cheap
toys on a street vendor's cart

The smell of roasting corn in the evening cutting through the
numbness,

The first sip from the mouth of a cooler damp glass coke bottle

Sharing these moments feels like a betrayal.

Ignoring them feels like sin.

Things Left on the Beach

Huntington Beach has titular tides
The first happens long before dawn
It'll come high but nowhere
Not wetting the pier's toes
With barely the strength
to wash ashore
All that I
Ever
Lost
Found
among
the damp sand
browning salt foam
bits of broken shell
sea glass worn smooth and dim
bleached cigarette butts
I see our memories of then
Looking new and fresh from the water
Not yet drying in the morning breeze
that comes in with the tide
pushing the heat and salt east
on the tributary
streets and sidewalks
seasoning them
with moments
both then
Now
You
and I
are salt
left at the last
high tide line
dried by the wind and sun
forgotten by the churning.
Coating the bodies of others
As we try to return to the sea.

Cookie Recipes

Chris told me he needs to get his diabetes under control as we set out the chairs for the Tuesday night N.A. meeting.

He actually said his doctor told him his new HIV medication means he won't die of AIDS, so he better get his diabetes under control.

We laughed at the idea that after all these years, the virus wouldn't get him, but he was going to get got by a cookie.

If it was double chocolate chip, it would be a black-on-black-on-black crime;

Oatmeal raisin would be a car accident with Subaru;

Gingersnap would be a hate crime.

We finished setting out the chairs and preparing the room, laughing like soldiers leaving a warzone for the last time.

Every now and then, he still texts me a new cookie.

We make these jokes on the Kaposi's sarcoma-covered backs of our dead friends.

I think they would understand.

Wood

You race far ahead through the cleared woods
Carried by the branches of your youth
Speeding to your potential
Over fallen pine needles
And the ripe acorns
I stop to gather
As tokens
Of our
time.

Underbelly/3 Hours until Closing Time at Velvet Nation, 1998

She has a face like a punk rock song,
A name she doesn't use at night,
And 3 hours left on her shift in the 60-60 cage before she can
go home,
Take off her tits,
Put her Face back in its box,
And pass gas like she wants.

Chuey says: "She's a good dude", because she always has that
white blown glass pipe in her purse.
The bar backs know they never have to roll a joint from a bar
napkin.

She kisses his forehead with a laugh and honest affection,
Despite their encounter in the walkin last spring,
A month before he brought his family back up from Mexico City.

And the Skyline drips drops,
I wonder,
As eyes wander,
Up her right thigh.