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Zackary Medlin

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ZACKARY MEDLIN

WHEN I SAY I MISS THE DRUGS

- *Winner: Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry* -

I mean I miss them like the holes in my gums
where they took my teeth. I tongued the stitches,
those spiders skittering through me. Taste of iron
like waves breaking themselves against basalt cliffs
cutting into a sea. My shores ache in the spray.
I miss them like coral nights lustering against us
in the bioluminescent glow released from the bacteria
seething on the surface of putrefying fish washed
onto the beach. I mean it like missing violence
on a dance floor spun into Charybdis, vortex of sweat-
scalded bodies like the Bible's boiling seas. Tinnitus
of wrath, psoriasis of need. Like missing the stars' flicker
in the constellations of silica glinting in moonlit asphalt—
how we reached for them, abrading our prodigal bodies
against the street. I thought this was about going home,
about shards of sun lacerating our flesh for want of bone.
Miss them like time ribboned out before us as roads in
a ramshackle atlas of kingdoms we've never seen.
The broken spine of a Frommer's Guide to Decay
and Razor Blades for Townies. I mean missing bands
of blue light unbraiding in the rearview, a siren's blare,
my cheek pressed to the trunk of a car. I mean it like
beads of blood, like bullets, like a loss of breath. I mean
it like scars. I mean it like how I missed all of their funerals.