

Love Like This Isn't Harmless

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FREMANTLE PRESS

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Faith, Awry

Every day I lugged laundry to the outside verandah,
praying for two good hours of flapping wind
waiting until a watery sun broke through the clouds
to penetrate the pegged-up clothes,

So simple were my prayers back then:
a parking spot. Time to read. A good night's sleep.
But so many poems. Lord,
so many poems
left unwritten.

So many
I was owed.

**ONE: a beautiful
and terrible design**

Betrayal

With Andy Jackson

Before I had a voice or a thought, words landed, penetrated
the marrow. *Defect. Deformity. Disorder.*

The spinal fusion operations were failed successes.
As in, my vertebrae were determined, no matter

what straightness I desired, to be bent to their own peculiar
version of upright. It's difficult, fused, to turn
around, to look behind myself. I am trying not to take this
as a metaphor. I need to perform surgery on these words,

to excise those that, while sounding like exhaustion
strip back our humiliation as people look at us
as if we were foreigners, rendered completely
invisible, not only by age, or gender, but infirmity.

I extend my cane towards the ground
like a diviner – this path,
this body, not the only crooked things. I mean, look
at the state of things. I could trip and plunge

into the hollow of myself, distracted
by this noise in my ears – *if you have a go,*
you will get a go. But what about all the unpicked
threads of the safety net? And who are these people

simply gazing beyond me? I am trying not
to take this as a metaphor. The sound of
air rushes in and through me as I fall, knee-first
onto gravel and the blunt fact of crip promise.

A Thing of Beauty

For Emily

Dimple (noun): an anomaly of the muscle that causes a dent in the cheek, when an individual smiles.

i.

I've been having this recurrent dream:
strapped to a chair and straining.
Arms muscled as a WWE wrestler,
thighs wasted,
sipping air as I push forward,
and forward towards
her and her face before me.

ii.

The viscosity of midday
light,

falling,

made porous and visible
as her skin touches mine. Light and more light,
pure as a votive candle,
my mouth against hers. We are newly made:
she is wholly beautiful.

iii.

Some call these dents: defect,
irregularity,
anomaly.
But where begins
the sweetness of a smile for one
and the twisted rail of spine for another?

iv.

This confluence of
genes and DNA –
the wide-eyed,
wide-mouthed shock of difference.