

Butterfly Nebula

A stellar death must herald it— the hottest star
throws off its envelope. Torus of dust
eaten and retched all its life. Two violent jets
of gases over 36,000 degrees Fahrenheit must rip
across space many heavy lightyears
out from under
tightened belt of the body, dark slit
running through the waist. A disk of weight, a thumb
of the divine pinches the butterfly almost
to severing. The thing about a resurrection—
the chrysalis must cleave expel the life blood
damp crushed wings
at first unrecognizable. The Magdalene looked
in all the wrong places. She
thought he was the gardener. The split-apart vowels
of her name uttered unfold
across constellation, stretching stream
of ultraviolet radiation making cast-off skin of the dead
star glow in two arching nebular lobes its new form
still gathering energy.

“Butterfly Nebula” was first published in *RHINO Poetry*.

Between 50 and 51

The walls mimic grasscloth, an imagined savannah
of cream and palest green echoed in subtle stalks
on carpet. The beveled mirror on back wall, the panel
usual, buttons one to sixty, but then that's all what my mind
reconstructs alone in the dark, in the panic and jangling
heartrate when the lights go out and the box rattles
and bangs against the shaking sides of shaft, dangling
on cords, on threads, dry metallic taste dumbing
my tongue. The distance matters, between you and me.
Between me and the ground, between terrifying plunges.
The weight of the car crashes, cracks. The cacophony
of shocked concrete heaves in my ears, screeches
in my bones. My hands flail, grapple
for anything. I should be on 51, walking to my beige office.
The drumming deafens now, no doors in the dead darkness
and my brain is frozen between the useless emergency
call button and the kind of prayer that is of the whole body,
of clamor and catastrophe, of take me and make me, of chaos
and clarity. My feet try to root into the pretend grasses,
but I lurch and sway with the casket or chrysalis.

“Between 50 and 51” was first published in *Sugar House Review*

Heart as Siphonophore

The researchers had imagined it, whipsawing
through silty sleeves,

the giant siphonophore, sea worm of such ghostly
fiber and length it would take hours

to watch it pass, the writhing blue bioluminescent
skin of it simultaneously here and far.

Now they witness it, photograph it, stare
at the improbable, slithering 150-foot

figment, ribboning in a quantum
state, the floating bell of head so distant

from the end of its colonized chambers
that the steadiness steers far from the fret—

stingers jostle in the eerie suck and ripple of its path.
Now, *praya dubia*, leap and swim forward

with sureness, now, wind sideways in uncertain fatigue.
The head arrives in an Australian oceanic canyon,

while the tail trails in a different time zone. So far
from true cadence of itself, two places at once:

there, the water glows aqua in your presence,
and here, the long, thin muscle still heaving,

reaching along the night-drenched bottom.

“Heart as Siphonophore” was first published in *Lily Poetry Review*

Fast Radio Bursts Detected Close to Earth

Some tongues go undiscovered. Neutron stars,
for example, declare their own discourse. Radio
antennae prick with their fast untranslatable bursts.
Astronomers scrutinize the chat, Rosetta stone
splinters. They're so sure what they hear is story, but love,
I am fluent in the slivers under story. Of all the languages
you and *I* exchange, the most inaudible
feeds the need at its origin, the one that happened
at the dawning, at the original searing
wound. The compression that shaped your life, cut

you away from yourself. The vowels beyond vespers,
low and longing, are freedom. The consonants spill
space, vastness spelling over. You know this.
You will take up the slow expanse, tacit greening, wrap
yourself in swells of soft blue skyline
which you and *I* transmit in silent letters speeding
close to earth. You will soundlessly hum along to the hook
of my quiet chorus. You will know that *I* voice
and restore the lightyears, that this box of hush is loud
with what only you receive.

“Fast Radio Bursts Detected Close to Earth” was first published in *Presence: A Journal of Catholic Poetry*, and subsequently in *Verse Daily*.