

from *THE INTROVERT'S GUIDE TO DREAMS*

In the gutted strip mall, you know everything is dead and nothing is rotting. A storm gathers like a jungle cat pacing just outside the firelight. The aluminum roof peels back, and the storm grows. You hear the rain, but you are not wet. You climb the wreckage. When you smile, it is as if your face has broken open with lightning.

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Outside, the rain blots out the scenery. Your world becomes what's nearest to you. Your world pushes its snout close to your face and yawns. You see its gnarled teeth. The world falls back asleep in your bent arms.

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You are very large and your lumbering very destructive, so the city has decided to chain you to a wall in the natural history museum. There, people gasp at your large thighs, how grotesque an eye is when enlarged. Gone are the days, when, unnoticed, you poured your purse into the street.

SOMEONE ELSE'S BABY

I carried

a bag of groceries
up the stairs
when the baby

peeked out.
He opened
his mouth,

and I could
see teeth

working through

gums,
a tongue

running over
their tiny
crenulations.

My wife
was so happy

I didn't
forget
the baby

she told me

something
very important—
about checking

receipts
so you know
what is yours.

SHADOW PUPPET

A single thread of blood

coiled around my body.

I twisted my fingers
into the shapes

I could make: rock, bird, canine.

(Dare I say wolf?
Pinscher? No, no, no.)

Outside, the rain furred the world
with tiny ephemerae.

Inside my mind, all my lovers

hold their hands on my chest
as if I were already a shade.

I did not want my body
to turn, but it did. It does.

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In the bathroom, you brush your teeth. The bristles sound like radio static. Your mouth fills with froth. When you spit, it is black and viscous. You step back and wait for it to slide down the drain. After it has gone, you hear it chant, *I love you*, from the plumbing.

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You run down the hallway of your home. The windows are broken. Electricity flickers from a single bulb. You see the closed door at the end of the hallway. The roof has collapsed, so snow falls in. The light flickers; the door is open. Moist heat seeps out.

*

You scurry in the space between walls. It is uncomfortable, but you can't find a way out. When you stop moving, you hear a chorus of children on the other side singing a name you desperately want to recognize.

FIVE ALREADY

Again,
the dream
of water
spilling
from cup
to emptied

cup. Emptied
again,
the cup
in the dream
spills
water,

and water
inside me empties
out. I spill
again
through this dream;
my body a cup.

I cup
water
in my dream.
I empty
myself again.
What spills

spills
from the cup
again—
water's
empty
dream.

My dream
spills
emptied
cups
like water;

again

I'm dreaming. A cup
spills water
until empty again.

APOCALYPSE WITH MORNING

I sang the name with my leaking
mouth. *Yitgadal v'yitkadash...*

From the faucet, forgetfulness. The ambulance

in the chest galloped through
the body's maelstrom. I was there,
and I was not

the skull's blank page. In the sink, the many liquid moons

gathered to splash the morning's face
as if this were a dream before a shave.

CAN OPENER

I twist
the can
opener.
The can,
toothless,
turns a smile.

I smile
as I twist
the toothless
can
in the can
opener's

opening
smile.
I can
twist.
I can
shout. If toothless,

I turn toothless
to the opened
can,
a smile
twisting
my face around. A can

can
turn toothless
in its twist,
opening
a smile.
A can

can
fit another can
in its smile.
A toothless

opener
twists

and twists a can,
never opening it. I can
turn a toothless wound to a simile.

BRIAN CLIFTON

Brian Clifton co-edits *Bear Review*. He is a PhD. student at the University of North Texas. His work can be found in: *Pleiades*, *Guernica*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Salt Hill*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Journal*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and other magazines. He is an avid record collector and curator of curiosities.