

AT
FIRST
&
THEN

POEMS

Danielle Rose





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ekphrasis on “the most beautiful suicide”

“at the bottom of empire state building [sic] the body of evelyn
mchale reposes calmly in grotesque bier her falling body punched
into the top of a car”

—*LIFE* magazine, May 12, 1947

because especially in death
a woman's body is not her own
if she had been paint
then the limousine an improvised canvas
and the gawking crowds
guests at some bizarre performance
instead it is crossed ankles arms arcing inward
as if warding against an attempt to steal her secrets
like me she wanted to disappear
i have too many of my mother's tendencies
perhaps she nervously tapped her foot
was no fun at parties and did not understand
that she was not actually broken
how i invent her a fiction from the tangles
of such real things
a spectacular line from a magazine
seven short sentences
where she expressed her need to be nothing
and we ignored her wishes
maybe this is why i am so easily seduced by violence
by how it fills the empty spaces with something i desire
that is not quite love
when they tried to move her she spilled
how a human being can become
water! slipping through our hands

aleister crowley summoned demons & all i get
is this tarot telling me i am always in the wrong

i want to become a fountain / first still stone / then bubbling water
like seeping / like an underground stream that swells beneath
us / but i still lacquer myself in protections like how a graveyard
becomes an ocean

/ like how i launder

my filth & then keep scrubbing / what is a stain but something we
keep washing / because i want to become my mother's high cabinet
/ where she kept her gods behind plastic containers / i just want to
stop asking questions about how i began / & flow like a fountain / i
can be still stone / i can be the water / always gently rippling / i want
to write this poem like a means to become corrected again & again
becoming / another round of scrubbing

variations on the death of tinkerbelle

keeling over this is meant to appear as suddenness

like cardiac arrest or seizure / but there is no emergency team
only a solitary clapping or how we understand pride

as the condition to possess a life / she hides behind a leaf

like i pull on a blanket of adjectives or close
doors in the face of my shame / it is almost like playing house

or playing at life / where keeling over is meant

to be a call for help she can't help herself
but to wither without a spotlight

& i am so like her except i cannot close the door / cannot shut

anything out / she is more like a lima bean
curled on the floor than a creature of light

so the viewer is reminded that she is a small thing / surrounded

by such bigness so unlike her bigness / this is a murder /
like flickering lamps a simple metaphor for death

this is because when light keels over it is a call / a call for help

but she cannot help herself so we clap and scream
like she was actually dying / and not just

a flicker of the light / keeling over / this is a murder / this is bloody

& her light is leaking / clap / scream / & i don't understand
i'm just a kid clapping because i don't want



Photo: Lola Arellano-Fryer

Danielle Rose is a poet and prose-writer from Massachusetts. Her work can be found in publications such as *Palette Poetry*, *Sundog Lit*, & *The Shallow Ends*. *at first & then* is her first chapbook.