Classic Poetry Series

C.J. Sage

- poems -

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Birdsong

I am eagle; don't be fooled by red silk
heels that sound so much like clanking clay
on hardwood floors where you and I one night
did lay when there was no heat left
to warm a chilling breast,
when your dense chest fell wet on mine.
I found a feather when you left,
it lay upon a pillow drenched in you.
Perhaps it was inside. It matters not,
as I have since then eaten it
and cannot prove to you that
it did, in fact, exist.

Before I'd ever heard your name
or pictured how you might have looked,
before I'd seen your constant face --
the one that waits inside dark eyes
to see if I can truly fly, or if instead
you might just plant my pinioned feet
into your waxy wood-grained floorboards,
making plumage turn to twigs that dangle
down a perfect fruit which you could pluck
from your soft bed while I grew old and weary
(but I was eagle; I grew light and wild) --
long before I'd brushed your flesh, these wings
had taken me to heights much higher than those red
silk shoes, those platforms to your dreamworld.

C.J. Sage

Bridge Ghazal

My love and I reside upon the belly of a bridge
with heartbeats of the sky?--the drums upon the bridge.

I've heard of songs that rise at night from pitch black oceans.
I've heard the strums of lyrics made by four hands on a bridge.

My love and I do landscapes for the gardens of the sea.
At night we sleep as seedlings at the center of its bridge.

Once I saw a Sufi breathe in seabirds, and send them out again.
I've seen people bearing blindfolds near the entrance of a bridge.

My love's old love, he says, had tried to douse him in a moat.
He grew gills to save himself and hid beneath a drawbridge.

The masters speak of magic at the middle of the rings
where Yes and No chase each other round the props of any bridge.

My love's new love, some say, makes far too much of things
as fundamental, elemental, as the structure of a bridge.

Anonymous submission.

C.J. Sage

Crisis Counselor

She was a coat of arms
seasoned for the job -- tough
and polished like tortoise shell.
When the women were tougher,
she'd tuck her advice-giving head
back against the executive chair,
let them try to fluff bent feathers,
watch them falling to their feet.
Then, her little turtle arms
would stretch out across the desk;
try to float a form --
a restraining order, maybe
a list of early warning signs --
but they'd keep on sleeping, sleep
hard through the sessions she'd spend
blowing on plastic ships, paper sails
rarely reaching port, and they would cry
like little children watching helpless,
dazed as she sunk their dreamboats,
sat on them, no coming up for air.
And perhaps she'd think of the little turtles
we'd kept confined to bathtubs as kids,
or of the public safety commercials
telling mother how, if she turned her back,
we could fall to sleep, slide and drown
in barely an inch of sitting water.

C.J. Sage

Fawn Ghazal

Inside a snowy blanket which put the trees to sleep,
I heard a fawn.
Out past the window's ice coat in the morning, I
found a sleeping fawn.

There are men in yellow kitchens watching hands of
brown-eyed women
while men in orange jackets dream in secret, of
capturing a fawn.

When I was younger I was taught, but have forgotten,
sweet timidity.
When I am older I will learn, by necessity, the
light-footedness of fawns.

Someone left a lily on my doorstep, eggshell white
with speckled leaves;
the card of introduction said the flower's name was
Fawn.

Sages wonder if it's possible for men to turn to
animals.
I wonder if they've pondered the agility of fawns.

Submitted by Joe Shields

C.J. Sage