

Two Poems by Emily Linstrom

Eric

My brother extinguished himself in twos:

two hours after birth / two in years before I was born /
by the birthday, two months apart—
he was smart, my brother;
he knew the cult of the newborn exit.

My parents took particular pleasure in telling me
had he lived I'd still be atom and fragment,
scouring the universe for a home to roost,
a god's skull to drop seed

and split;

My mother would have sealed up her womb
Egyptian tomblike, leaving me to incubate
a separate fate, unexcavated—my azure egg—
the possibilities were endless.

Was I ever their daughter? my father's changeling scorn
as if I'd been borne of black magic or some faerie child
of sideways origins, fat bellied from gorging
on baby boys, a forager at the breakfast table
laughing over spilled milk—

How could he have known the terror
of a walking cosmic error?
a girl freckled with as many curses as christening gifts,
a rip in the seams of her older sister's hand-me-downs?
(as if clothes ever made the man)

For years I tried to barter, brother:
flip a coin of Styx against our mother's hips,
reverse the charm;
she was not a woman made for daughters,
no, her cruelty needed a son's backbone,
a reflection that was not her better,
an incest to call her very own.

Because of you I learned to speak
the language of coffins, of Spanish moss
and ashes scattered across the tropics;
I bleed Florida Water between my thighs,
I am the rook and rebellion, destined for water scrying.

They say I came into this world uncrying—
silent as the grave—
the doctors worried for days
and commented on my perfectly formed nose,
as if I was already growing at the rate of
inherited sin.

Picket

the women here don't run wild any more,

instead they pass the afternoon sipping limeade,
swapping gossip like a Greek chorus,
heads together in one collective past
when they were girls, and in love, and fast—
the women here don't run wild any more

these days
they chase after husbands and children like chickens,
taking turns too sharp for shopping carts,
almost like they know
they were meant for a winding road in Monaco:
wearing nothing but a silk scarf,
legs apart,
a playboy at the wheel,
that delicious feeling of calculated danger

—will just upset the supermarket display,
and even Grace Kelly wouldn't go out *that* way

the women here don't run wild any more.

Emily Linstrom is a NYC-based artist, currently adventuring on the Pacific Northwest coast. Her writing and photography have been featured by/in Three Rooms Press, Rose Red Review, Project Naked, Eunoia Review, American Slander, Nailed Magazine, The Literary Bohemian, Misfit Magazine and Yes, Poetry, as October's featured poet. She is currently first prize winner of Pulp Literature Press's 2015 The Raven short story contest.

