

Brilliant Corners

Nuzhat Bukhari

Beditions

find corners everywhere,
marks of invention, wakefulness

– Roy Fisher, ‘The Thing About Joe Sullivan’

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Arsenal

*The unbearable weight
of the lightest bodies.* – Orla Guerin

Her report shows a child
digging a grave.

I turn to open a book's hinge,
enter its bleached rooms.

To measure a word's ballast,
its abutment to a bullet.

As paper under ultra-violet
is a liny labyrinth.

Words also knot-inwardly,
like *arsenal* – cut in Arabic:

dār al sinā'a, house
of art and manufacture.

I too, was a maker, of forms
honed as any bullet.

Along alloyed grids,
I must've grazed disgrace.

And now, saw fear
in a handful of words –

Mortal Acts

Who said to kill does not require gentleness? – Nawal El Saadawi

Grey dogs on the sand were drawing wraparound lines
with the muscularity of male dancers. Pumping hot breathings
into vapours of iced air. Bleak energies trailed the atmosphere
as an invisible net. Caught eyes. Made hearts thump, faster.

Just strays jostling for scraps –

Near the fourth of the Seven Sisters, by Birling Gap, along the shore's bevelled
edge. Shoes sink one-thumb deep in silt-sumps. Pin you. Seconds
on, a rip-tide unlooses the fix, swipes traces clear. Curdle, meld into a pale
yellow blank slate. A game we play in the hypnotic boomerang
of waves.

Now you see me, now I'm gone –

High combers slapping flanks of cliffs, hard. Burly blanched flesh
buffering fracturable bones. Beauty, corrosion in a ritual we call
nature. These are remains of coccoliths, fragile sea organisms, we stroll on.
Millions of frames hoarded, layer-by-layer, like sheets of an unopenable
volume.

Here our protagonist arrives from a nowhere –

Acts gather in grains, hair-line fissures. Bits of thought cached
in a parallel calendar. Minuscule gestures cluster into clotted
forces. Kindling, killing seed with a slow pulse, twitches of intent.

Mer, murder, rub away something, harm –

In between a lighthouse, incinerator towers. A murky, dank, curled shape.
Almost a forgotten overcoat, blanket, or wilted dinghy. County's headlines stare
in stiff black ink. Torn newspapers toss between a girl's, a seagull's screech.

Anybody know her, anybody –?

Faded crimson bra, label's print erased, underwear missing. Ropey russet hair
tangled in shreds of seaweed, as if on a cloth doll. Blueing skin, of sandpaper
feel. Around her neck a platinum choker cut in three-petalled design,
faux zirconia gems. A coroner says injuries are inconsistent with a height fall.

No sign of third-party involvement –

When isobars allow, and ocean is flat, you can view spits, bluffs,
of France. Some say, she drifted here. No one admits. Even by degrees
of separation.

Each person creates a version –

At the burial, a hundred or so, strangers. Council's rep says, 'I guess
if she's nobody's, she's all of ours. We all feel responsible for her.'
Church's rep chants, 'And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.'

We rise, fall, portraits of broken pieces –