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**Short Time  
Enjambment  
November the Second  
The Death of a Revolutionary Friend**

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JAIME AN LIM

## Short Time

I am haunted by the sadness of men  
 hanging out at night  
 in all the parks and alleys of the world.  
 They wait and meander  
 weighing  
 measuring  
 the safer distance  
 between dread  
 and desire.  
 Every face a catalog of possibilities,  
 every look a whole vocabulary of need.

Tonight, you are the dream  
 who walks in my waking sleep,  
 who bears miraculously  
 the shape voice motion of remembered love.  
 How can I resist the reckless

Leap from the world  
 of furtive bushes and tunnelling headlights  
 to this room, no less anonymous,  
 of thin walls, thinning mattresses  
 where we grapple and thrash  
 like beached sea creatures  
 breathing the dry unfamiliar air?

When you stand to go, I ease myself  
 into the hollow your body leaves.  
 I press the faint smell of you to my face.  
 O Christ, were I loving you  
 drinking your blood, eating your flesh!

But the morning betrays nothing.  
 The chair in the corner stands mute,  
 the mirror repeats your absence.

When the curtains are flung back  
to let the harsh light in,  
the bed looms empty.

I am finally all I have.

## Enjambment

who  
will  
    rock the waves  
            bend  
    the rainbow shape  
            the quail's  
            egg who  
will nibble  
    the moon  
    fill  
    the peach  
            stone shut if  
            you  
    go love  
who will  
    pillow  
            my thoughts color  
    my skin milk  
            my arching  
                    swollen  
            body when  
    you go love  
who  
    will stoke the dark  
            fire  
    between my legs

## November the Second

Another year given and gone.  
 I've come through, safe from this one more time  
 From screeching tire and bloodied knife  
 To stand before your silent grave.  
 The day is warmer than I thought,  
 It burns a pathway through the haze  
 Of a thousand bird-filled mornings  
 That would never touch your eyes.

Three years, and I still wonder  
 If this is all there is. Finally. For us.  
 For all our solemn vows of love  
 And deathlessness and hope. This mound  
 Of dirt slowly leveling to the ground,  
 This slab of stone that claims your crumbling name.

Once, in jest, you promised you'd come back  
 To tell me whether heaven or hell  
 Truly lay on the other side. Weeks afterwards  
 I waited for a sign, some phosphorescence  
 Gathering in the dark to take  
 The shape of body, hands, and flowing hair.  
 You never did.

How can this silence, words folded into stone,  
 Be all there is. I cannot, my wife, my love,  
 Cannot bear the thought: The unkind  
 Words I could never take back and make right  
 The stupid wrongs I did out of ignorance  
 Or pride, when you were alive.  
 If I could believe your silence  
 Is a way of bestowing forgiveness, I might  
 Learn to let go at last, be at peace  
 As the trees are at peace, content  
 To stand in one root-locked place and accept  
 What the sky gives or withholds.

To cup in memory's hands your face  
 Growing softer and dimmer with the years . . .

In the air, the pungent smell of melting wax.  
 Gladioli and mums already mottling,  
 Like mortal flesh, in the morning heat.  
 Rank weeds shimmer in watery light.  
 I fall on my knee. I bow my head.  
 I do as lovers will, in mourning's dishevelment:  
 With bare hands, I tug and tear and pull  
 The encroaching weeds from your grave.

## The Death of a Revolutionary Friend

—for E.R.

once your eyes were fresh mornings  
 wide open to new beginnings  
 your face a mountain stream so  
 transparent we could see every least bit  
 of cloud troubling your sorrow's sky  
 for you hoarded sorrow easily the way  
 the spaces beneath the bed collect  
 loose change dust fallen hair  
 the sad debris of our desperate lives  
 you cried mothering the pot-bellied child  
 in Cotabato you raged hearing  
 the massacre of the villagers in Jolo  
 you grieved over the ineptitude  
 the thieving in high places  
 and all week long a grey rain fell  
 your love we know now was as ruthless  
 and as reckless as your anger and hope  
 you left the corrupted city for the mountain  
 because you could not bear to see us shrivel  
 because you loved too much  
 because you dared to shape the world anew  
 but to whose heart's desire  
 what you could not touch with gentle words  
 you would challenge with fire bullet and scourge  
 and we were left to tend the dying garden  
 to nurse the maimed to bury the salvaged dead

now the mountain is giving you back  
 you lie in a felled tree  
 that cradles your stillborn dream  
 the east my friend is not red  
 and we move in endless circles of grief  
 like the iron bars that enclose the grass  
 that encloses the hunchbacked house  
 of the living that hems us in  
 over and over and over again  
 a broken song holding the stubborn fact  
 of your dream's implacable death

FATIMA LIM-WILSON

### **Alphabet Soup**

(Mimicry as a Second Language)

Angel of letters, feed me.  
 Beat your wings till I remember  
 Cardboard cut-outs of ABC's. Why  
 Does my memory hobble, lift  
 Empty pails from an English castle's dark well?  
 Fill me with the welter of vowels,  
 Googol of consonants, tender French  
 Hearts, dead Latin roots from where words grow,  
 Insidiously. My tongue smokes, a  
 Joss stick trailing mixed signals. What  
 Keeps me from balancing a silver spoon  
 Locked in my mouth? An echo.  
 Mother humming her made-up melodies. She  
 Nudges me to move my lips with hers.  
 Old wives rustle, whisper tales in my ears.  
 Palimpsest of longtailed syllables,  
 Quick darting wings of a windseeking accent.  
 Run, I must rend the tent of Thesaurus.  
 Slash away till I warble, silvery voiced with a cut  
 Tongue. I grow, a hunchback, trailing my master,  
 Unctuous and anxious. Sweet, mute angel, cast your  
 Veil over me to muffle my voice of broken glass.