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**SHADES
OF
PARADOX**

KAOLIN FIRE

A JAR Writers' Collective Publication

SHADES OF PARADOX

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as a physical collection of cut-up poetry
from the original text
'Art and Lies' by Jeanette Winterson

For Kim.

In celebration of all the shared revolutions around the sun and those still to come. And for insisting my work aspire to be more, when sometimes it is easier to choose otherwise.

For Kaolin.

Without your inspirational images the words would have remained dormant in their original form and I would be a lesser person for it.

For Kate.

Your magick freed me. Thank you for opening the way so I could find a new place to be creatively in the world and to know I am always loved and supported in everything I do.



teach the parrot his lines
and he will reorder the words
kept pressed between the pages of this book

was it wise to fall in love with a construction
that could not be deconstructed
intoxicating thoughts transformed
by heat and censure
writing out of beauty
out of love
and out of wisdom

the word whose solace cracks the font
and no longer looks
for companionship at night

I cannot eat my words
but I do



naked - without sound
through the silent air
not one flesh but one image
and the image more potent than the flesh

he wrapped the brittle pages
back into his skin
memoirs of confiscated selves
a perpetual suicide
and rebirth in the deep
to piece together a fragmented life

there is only motion
nothing still but the fissures
and hollows of melancholy

lift me up and there will still be songs
a sparking power
that never hesitates to live



I turned the wrong way into a one-way street
and I knelt between
abandoned cross sections
waiting for me

I look at myself in the mirror
where I am a reversed image
contained in a looking-glass fantasy
of reversing rules

Muser and Muse
in perilous communion
with a love that grafts us
twice on one longing

I am wounds of waiting
in need of a salve
yet fearing it
where colour
slapped against the wall
is changed



you have words that pin me to patterns
by the unlikeliest of routes
my courage forced to a distance
so much can be hidden in 'I love you'

we stood in the garden together
looking at the trees
the nuances of nature
and the refinements of art
lit in your face
rising naked from the rapt effect
of curiosity and desire
the teeming symbiosis
of lust and affection
twisting and writhing together

if you stretched out your hand
and offered me the fruit
would I take it?



whisper to my soul
that which I yearn for
recite me until you know me off by heart

gold light on the golden city

my soul is the dissolving mirage
of a stained-glass world
a sharper joy migrating light
and the pulled-apart space
where hope is opening
and I am a drop of sealing wax
on the hierachy of wings

the words that fly from your lips
are words without explanation

why must I be realistic about wanting
another turn of time
to kiss you again



the heart in its dark pen recognises the light
a strange equivalence
where what was thought to be revealed
kept its mystery but lost its terror

in the nightmare city
where I have continued my days
art annexes the stars
and the word rises above itself

I use my alphabet
to disentangle the arcane deceit
challenging the fragments
that I am the possibility of language
past, eternally present and undestroyed
to tell what is left before the end

I fear the half-hearted world
listening
 listening
 listening
 through the bodiless streets
 and dirty air with
 nothing
 in
 between



I ran my pain up through the house
beyond the in-out-in-out of my defeated lungs

I did not fall on my own

time - whose thing I am - writes on me:
we don't see delight in life
we learn to deny such things
woven in desires that the appetite
cannot satisfy

what to do with the lines on my body?
stop saying "sorry"
assert your individuality
and quicken the unknown word in its
own bloody ink



at the end of each black-and-white day
she dreamed in colour
copying carefully the things she loved the most

for a moment the desolate space budded
she saw extraordinary events
bent under twists of refracted light
the crack in the window filled with stars

what had been harmed
was given back
undamaged
nothing remained
except
for the abandoned observer's fiction

letting go
made re-remembering
a gracious act of falling
into unknown currents



I am the unsaddled sea ridden twice daily
by the moon and planets in musical intervals

I am the sun in the window
no longer glass-paned in too little joy



I love the deception of sand and sea
the loosening of unshaded light
falling from the sun
onto the end-stop of the universe

let me see you as you are
no need for darkness
nor light
lie beside me
and let the seeing
be the healing

you saw my past
compressed behind the pulled-down blind
in frantic shadows
of the nicks in the canvas
and stitching flaws within the seamless
seemingly unchanging whole

let me see the division of you
for the isolated heart loses
so much beauty
and buys its survival
at the cost of its one true life



I may be a creature of infinity
a chessboard knight
hoping to be swifter than the game
whose faith does not prove to be a life-belt

I want the keen edge of longing
to keep myself honed and sharp
to slip between the central forces
of the world
that fill the air
to renew and to invigorate
to run my blue body through
a mile of frost
the shape of you
to shut out every inessential
and fully open
my spirit and mind

I have been satisfied
with waters from your well
my mouth knows the words
and now I name myself
overflowing



let me lean on this fluid geometry
the points and surfaces and lines
that must undergo change
until I am no longer what I was

I blame myself
for where the fruit fell
and was not gathered
I blame myself for collusion
in too little life
and too little love

I forgive the rotting days
and the mirror of life
that was not enough
I forgive the union of reproduction
and insincerity
swinging impotent legs
above a shiny floor

the golden city
and the fallen woman in her red skirt
together clutch the sins of the world
preparing to tell them
once more



drop through the long cylinder of our hours
into a second life packed with embers
ecstatic in a garment of flames

there was a clue
I followed it
and piece by piece
the fragments returned

consciously loosening all the grey years
into one bright line
what can be known about me?
and what is true?
that is - which is truest?
for the past fits into a new history
always repeating itself
and memory crouches over me
taking the air

in bare feet
balanced on the girders of the unknown
what do I dare write?
and what dares write me?



I cheat myself out of the person I could be
and while failure can be forgiven
it cannot be excused

your scarf fluttered out like a pennant
red lipstick and green eyes
hair swarming bees
I could smell you on the wind
as I climbed the long climb
back to the last standing room
of my heart
where under your own cruel lamp
you question yourself without remorse
either you were or were not
never satisfied by approximation

a minute can alter a lifetime
and when it arrives
will we know the time it's due?



in the parted space where her spirit breathes
I will not hide
here I can read the clairvoyance
of her mouth

the story is not at all the same
although the facts are identical

a bright red baby yells herself purple
in the blue air
into the best clothes
and the dead air

how much of her thinking
had already been thought
by someone else?

although the facts are the same
the story is not at all identical

she paints herself out of the night
into the circle of the sun
she thinks in an octave
lined with gold-leaf filaments
where light illuminates the four corners
of her power now



he was the burning book that all the pyres of time
had not put out and would not heed to
she sieved time through her body
in obedience to gravity

the secrets you keep on me
dance in the long spear of light
motes of neglected space
where I run my fingers down the margins
of noticeable stains upon my mind

if I burn what is left of my soul
could my body force a future
into its own light?

it is not too late
to re-member
a broken and lifeless past
hidden away
but for the shafts of sunlight
that betray me



I dream of flight
to rise above the smallness of it all
one real chance at light
cutting through the fear of death

I see my own reflection
in the black stars in your eyes
you could have filled any space
but the space you filled was me

my hands shake under the weight of the light
squares saturate my palms
and yet my heart leaps
for this is the season of shooting stars

falling in love
turns into a few lines of physics
gravity's insistence
and the heart drops
ready to love

but to love you well
I shall have to be in love
with more than love itself
and be prepared to discover myself
a fluke of weak sun
magnified through thick glass



if my clothes were vellum and my flesh parchment
perhaps you would have lifted me down
and laid me on your little table
to know me better

time and the bell
one hard on the heels of another
hand-to-hand combat
between the wedding bell and final bell
one by one - the fall - the clang - silence
so many lie down and freely give up
 day comes - night falls
 night comes - day falls
and the sun dial on my chest
drags me to where shadows collect
in the deep ruts you left behind

I raided my body
made poems from yours
learned the forms
and mastered them
to become mistress to the narrative

I am a warrior
and this is the epic
of my resistance



balanced on the primeval ledge the word calls
to her in syllables that hang the world
on its hook and lift her off all fours
to put a god in her mouth

she is the howling belly
before the coming of the word
unread
unwritten
untransformed
go back to where words began
and throw them up through time
until they catch in a new mouth
and are spoken again
through time
and time returns
in the pleasure and
illusions of the word

I remember the gaps in history
know myself measured
by the change experienced
when the page illuminates itself

see me
see me now
I am not Lucifer
whose cuts bleed light



I watch him disappear
between plate-glass emotions
a landscape I have long since flattened
not to heal but to forget what it is that matters

you rightly read the moment
while I stumble through the second-hand text
of doubtful faith and shy jabs at passion
you see into the fiery furnace
but can only carry a few lukewarm coals
for a road too dangerous to cross
except through love
I have preferred a fraudulent response
to artistic rapture
and stayed a battened hatch
balanced on the girders of my imagination

I have forgotten
that without personal landmarks
people will fill spaces
so there is never enough air to breath
nor light to see by



even now as I know the moment
the moment is gone
air caught on wrought iron railings
simultaneously bound in passion and loss

I descend

I try to tell the truth
in spaces that reject the light
where no-one has been to the bottom

you dive down
through the layers of darkness
to my shipwrecked past
where I am alone
at the very bottom

I need these places
that disappear behind the moon
where the crescent curve of nothing
exists beyond now
and nothing exists
beyond this scythe of light

I am the closed dead hand
that opens beneath the sun of you



we take our lipsticks and draw bows for lips
and bathe our heels in mercury
we push through and leave behind
the clinging fog of expectation

'you were always a difficult child'
 heavy with red
 fierce under chrome yellow
 a bare room with a single book
 trapped beneath smiling polished boards
 time pressing against a thin pane
 small and forgotten

'do you know who you are?'
 today I am unrelieved metal
 beautiful and surprising
 pale patterns worked against
 an austerity of line
 and harmonies of power
 simultaneously achieved

'victory'
 the word undresses me
 'victory'
 I take my paint brush
 and begin on a body unused
 to these day-lit colours
 I am Victory
 defying your opinions of me



who lied to you and bound you for safety's sake?
who called their meshes your own good?
you were a body weighed down
among the frost-cast stars

your kiss threatens my frozen world
a living fountain of ichor and gold
held in the hands of a goddess

you try to heal me
drive vermilion floods
through shut lock-gates
so light pierces my side
in rapture

what am I in this?
what will bring you back to me?
when you know what happens next?
when we know what remains
 when the story has been told?

I try to make the cut
as simple as possible
the chronicle of an outline
told in blood

and so the story drowns



choose to read between the lines
as the lines themselves crumble the paper
let go
to hold on

I am the place
I used to come home to
now bricked with lies
falsehoods rot at my feet
and my trembling hand
is a forbidden key
you must control

shall I lie beside you
and tell you what it is like
how fallen creatures
thrive on gravity
and use it to anchor despair
to feed their desire

I must re-home myself
so I made wings
strapped them to your heavy body
clumsy in the unweighted air
and at daybreak
in delight
you shatter beneath me



with a single stroke of my pen
I condemned us
and every day I'll pay for you to love
someone else with passion late-lit

I had almost ebbed away
the atomic composition
of not too much
an empty space and hidden unhappiness
threatening to spill over onto the pavement
to be carelessly lost
among anonymous feet

this small parcel of grace
at rest against my heart
will that be enough
for I am made of points of light
without boundaries or orientation
while I shed what has been my life

I want to run up hills
be the freedom of the wind
and shout until the rains come
to soak my parched body
then I will flow
as a quietly contained sea
where the waters never break



I saw her heart turning over and over
through somersaulted air that ignored its bounds
and leapt love that leaves corruption
on living and dead alike

I have been a nice copy
of millions of others
a random collection of stray desires
striving to be satisfied
a crumbling passion
of shadows and glorious lights
trying to find the right way home

do you scatter coals over consciousness?
do you return to an accelerating body?
do you know that things move violently
 back to their place
 but calm once there?
can you go back?

I went but you were gone
too long kept famished
and I am left
with a withered copy
of your blessing



what has the clock done with the moments
in between the last day and this?
lost we pawn the hours
that cannot be redeemed

did I see you?
a man of infinite space
on a ledge in the night
where grief had been reconstructed
not once but many times
a vision of my own? a vision of you?
one that made sense of all the broken pieces
the hollow of your mouth
and the excavation where the words are dug

time does her work
hands down a manuscript
for resuscitation
between poet and the word
and light falls from the seamed sky
in halos and cloaks
as equinoctial waves
that box at the moon

kiss me where light
waits on the black water
holding me



the future could be driftwood
clouds and memories
or what she still had
but she wanted a view she did not recognise

people vanish everyday but not you and me
we know who's hiding and why
 their shuttered hearts cooing over failure
 comforted by death
 in great indifference
 cowardice and wilful sadness
 as neglect of beauty
 and scorn of love
 the hiss and pull of substance
 beaten away while the past
 drags the future behind it

the wind washed of feeling begins
light drained of colour
becomes unclouded
the lines simpler and more profound
then

 we leap
 and grab the future
 ignoring the susurrations
 of the past



I am silently cutting 'I love you'
sharpened on a lying-stone behind closed doors
I must pretend to feel nothing
even though I do

I see from the extravagant and torn frontispiece
that you parade yourself as autobiography
entire? honest? I doubt it
a fiction? certainly
will I acknowledge the fiction I am though
for the lie can wear my clothes too?

not all facts are known
and what is known
is not necessarily a fact
am I theory against all known facts?

they told her of a fire she did not know
the coals were her bones
and her heart the kindle
she would find it and light it in herself
somehow

the universe hangs on its thread
waiting for me to burn
but will I be a faithful memory to it?



I am home - my veins and bone
my mind - the odd attic room
where everything is kept
and the key is not forbidden

I took the note from your hand
 words passed from life to life
 the brand of the word
 stamped on love through time
and left you a piece of paper of my own
 love recorded against time
 the word divine
 in human form

it was a long time ago
 petals at your feet
 damp and tender
 fallen roses and the rising moon
 bud - bloom - blown

I have waited at the water's edge
 but still you have not come
 was there nothing
 to all that we were?

I did not guess it was possible
 to lose you to indifference



feel passion which is not possession
use it to believe that beauty is a fertile ark
to save what humanity is left in us

we looked behind and saw time
churning the sands
in pyramids and river beds
in the caravanserai of civilisation
winding through the patient desert
our yearning in flames of tongues
insistent words
curling off the vivid heat
bearing the watermark of camouflage in love

the geography of our hearts
is faraway perils and nearby apathy
read between lines where there's nothing but dirt
and the pith and marrow of us
before the end
yet still we long to feel the impassioned heart
and the rhythm which created it

I'm fine - everything is fine
until the heart shudders
the day we fall

