MIDWAY MUSE

LITERARY JOURNAL

• "You write so beautifully. The inside of your mind must be a terrible place."
– Edgar Allen Poe

The Midway Muse

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Table of Contents

A word from our sponsor	1
Lucy in the Sky	2
Lives Like Piano Pangs	4
Artist Statement	10
Kitty Kats	11
Oasis	12
Where I'm from	13
Teaghlach Einne	16

A word from our sponsor…

The Muse is a goddess.
She is alive.
Rising from dormancy,
she reveals herself
new and vibrant as
the phoenix reborn of fire.
Spreading benefaction,
she bestows her oracles
ancient and eternal
generously, graciously.
But she is a ravenous queen,
demanding sacrifice:
Heart and soul. Worship.
Worship of words.
If you would thrive,
you must heed her call.
She is a goddess.
She is *your* goddess.
You must feed her.

--Rebecca Luttrell Briley

Lucy in the Sky

Numb with pain;
The tower is her catalyst.
She feels the tangible stability of the edge...
Exhausted, she refuses to feel a second longer.
The wind sweeps beneath her limp body.
Her dreams and fears sweep away into an infinite night...

Time fades tragedy.
The people laugh; they forget the pain.
It rains, their hearts break.
They break into a thousand pieces;
showering the universe.
They float, stars in the sky;
lucid dreams.
Despondent minds;
trying to forget that day.
Frozen in time, unable to budge.
Laughing away…

--- Emily K. Todd

Lives Like Piano Pangs

Solitary and concurrent. Individually, and as one. They drifted peacefully, swathed in the black velvet subspace of 2 a.m., free-floating through the void between days, suspended in a vacuum of time stood still. Grains of sand trickled ever so slowly through the universe, torpid and lingering, like flecks of snow swirling through silver lamplight at night, or distant frozen stars shivering amidst a lonesome sea of black.

The two figures hung languidly in the quiet familiarity, huddled away from the world and sprawled contentedly in a cavern in a world of their own making, each nuzzled into the sought comfort of the other's steady breathfall. Neither touched; neither spoke. They didn't need to. Spanning the insubstantial space between them, their spirits were inextricably tangled up with one another, meeting somewhere in the center of the room and meshing until neither was sure where one ended and the other began, twining together on a plane that far transcended the corporeal. They were engulfed, swallowed whole and kept whole, cushioned by

membrane and suspended in cytoplasm, forming a single, self-sustaining unit. A lifeform all their own.

Beyond their impenetrable bubble, the city of London crumbled, folding in on itself and collapsing into nothingness, snuffing out the brash, orange glare of the streetlights and muffling the drone of reality in favor of animated dreamstate. Neon signs guttered and dissipated into mist, and amber-lit windows winked out like watchful eyes slipping into sleep, until the only thing that pressed against the pane of the room's single window was a thick and oily darkness. Through this darkness, muted tendrils reached out and squeezed, clamping down on the throat of the waking world, and suffocating the clamor of the city until all that was left was the glorious hum of *them*. Engulfed in the stillness and the empty space of the room, they felt full, cradled to life and wakefulness, and permeated by a mindful and spiritual arousal that burned in the bellies of their souls.

Nothing existed beyond this room. Not to them.

Where he lay atop the other's bed, the stillest of the two could trace the shadows on the blanched ceiling with his wide, blue eyes. Spine sunk lazily into the mattress and staring straight up, he mapped out every line, crack, and fleeting shape that bloomed across the plaster like a Rorschach. Garbed in nothing but a blue cotton t-shirt and clashing patterned pajama bottoms, the young man lay upside-down on the bed, his head at the foot and his bare feet on the black headboard, where the strand of tiny fairy lights decorating the top of the bedframe cast a white glow on his toes. One of his arms was thrown carelessly across his own stomach, hand dangling limply at the curve of his waist; the other arm lay outstretched by his side, thin pale fingers picking mindlessly at the bedclothes. The black-and-white checkered duvet beneath him was rumpled and askew on the bed, revealing flashes of the dark blue sheets that lay underneath. His messy black fringe was flopped in his face, mussed against the bed and nearly veiling one of his eyes. Beneath his shock of hair, his expression was vague and pensive, but his body was slack, his broad shoulders visibly relaxed into the blankets, his chest rising and falling in steady rhythm.

If he turned his head, he could see where the other was sat before the rickety black piano that was hunched against the far wall, his head bowed and fingers dancing across the faded black and ivory keys. His graceful hands fluttered and pulsed like a heartbeat, coaxing a deep and melodious hum from the slightly off-key maw of the grinning instrument. With his eyes, the one on the bed traced the soft planes of the pianist's back. The familiar curve of his spine was bent into a relaxed slouch, thin black shirt clinging tenderly around his shoulder blades, and his rounded shoulders rolled delicately as his arms darted out to chase notes and shepherd them with gentle nudges back together near the center. Loose sweatpants were slung low on his hips, a thin ribbon of waistband peeking from beneath the hem of his shirt, and his dark brown hair, freshly washed that morning, was wisped into silky, spiced curls, the kind that beckoned wandering fingers which would coax from him his own fractured notes.

From where he lounged on the bed, the eldest watched and listened to the drowsy rhythm spilling from his companion's fingertips. As he drifted,

minute details of the other young man swam into hyperfocus before his eyes—the concentrated coil of his shoulders; the curl of his socked toes where they nestled in the pale carpet; the short, downy hairs at the nape of his neck where his hairline tapered off, fading into smooth, golden skin. There was something raw and vulnerable in the way he played, sincerity in the uncertain skitter of fingers, in each slipped note and splintered melody.

There was a swallowed breath as the music rose to a muted waterfall roar, suffusing the air like a breathy gale with a shuddering energy and a willful, waking consciousness that pervaded their senses. The rhythm thrummed in time to blood, as fingers spun out webs of fluid sound. Molecules in the room were hypercharged into quivering action, the friction between them igniting gunpowder brainwaves. The two listened and breathed in synergy and found each note intimate, like a brush of skin against skin; like the tentative glide and press of lips and slick twine of tongue, the curl and clench of fingers and toes in fabric and flesh; like folding back ribcages to reveal hearts drumming in rhythm to the drumming of fingers, naked and exposed. They could feel each

other across the room through veins and live wires of living energy, shimmering like static.

Slowly, the swell of the music ebbed to a lingering patter like scattered raindrops. In the expanding quiet, their voices were hushed, only the soft, even pulse of lungs swelling and contracting left to tremor the hazy space. On the bed, there was a slow blink that brought the man at the piano into sharpness, and on the piano teeth dainty birdsteps trailed off into a warm and yawning stillness as tired hands withdrew. Unwilling to rupture the silence, there was no voice from the bed as the piano player stood and turned to face him, but there was a beckon in his eyes, as pools of blue and brown drowned in each other like oceans thrusting against cliffsides. Beneath the glow of fairy lights and swathed in black and white and dark blue, flecks of amber and gold sparked in chocolate eyes, and even his sleepy murmurs sounded like music.

-- Cait A. Smith

Artist Statement

colors, textures, shapes
my art
representation of beauty in life
ugliness – sameness – difference
blending reality& imagination
the color of sunset
the shades of dimension
the waiting canvases of life
art is my passion
my DNA's life path

--Linda Lou Pilcher



--Linda Lou Pilcher

Oasis

Swift liquid like movements

Big-small one after the other

On and on

Vibrations jump from

All four boarders

Symmetrical – asymmetrical

Rhythms flow from the vibrations

Connected to the strings

Of my heart

346

Ever lasting moment

--Aketzali

Where I'm from

I'm from Chapman subdivision,
With big roads and small houses.

I'm from a three bedroom home,
With two parents, two sisters, and one brother.

I'm from a little town,
With a closed dome surrounding it.

I'm from high school sports,
With a future life of a factory worker.

I'm from a broken family,
With tears and anger.

I'm from a drama home,
With a ball as my security blanket.

I'm from having fun,
With the idea of one day getting out.

I'm from a wooden backboard,
To a glass one with hundreds of fans.

I'm from Ken Barrett field,
With a brick wall surround Rhea Stadium.

I'm from the shadows,
With the hope of light.

I'm from a gym,
With no air and rusty weights.

I'm from a 1A school,
With many titles.

I'm from an easy school,
With college battles.

I'm from a closed in town,
With hope and desire.

This is the place I call home,
Because to me it matters.

I made it out,
With that the town chatters.

Russellville KY, is where I'm from,
I'm not ashamed
I am flattered.

--Barrett Croslin

Teaghlach Einne

Rain falls *a capella*, quiet on blackberry rose
and froth of Queen Anne's lace, kissing the
granite face of Celtic cross and ancient ruin.
If there is any bit of soil or stone in Ireland
that belongs to me, it is here—Teaghlach Einne—
the graves of saints and scholars of Aran and
of the fisher kings and queens of Inis Mor.
Like standing stone I stand, one foot in a 15-
centuries' old grave, the other on the edge
of the earth over-watching the sea-crashed cliffs.
I feel my roots moling down through sand and
sea grass, entwining with the buried clan of
bone and briar, anchoring at least a part of me
to this shore, while wind coaxes me here and
there, upward and beyond.
Words stir within me but cannot translate
on my separate tongue. They pile up inside
like rocks stacked in strange strata mortared
only by memory into fences crossing the
island as if blessed by 100 thousand priests:
first druid, then this younger one veneered
over the primordial like a ritual mask—
secrets stagnant as fossils layered in limestone.

But below, the voice of the sea cannot be muffled.
sounding its death rattle in the throats of caves,
it hurtles its reckless swan song against the cliffs
unforgiving as the petrified past, impervious as time.
To speak now would rival such eruption but
be lost as dry liquid fury rising on seafoam
evaporating in the mists of evening to fall
as rain, soft and quiet, on the foundations
Of Teaghlach Einne, and on Inis Mor.

-- Rebecca Luttrell Briley



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