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i'm never believing in god

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i'm never believing in god

Kay Tarleton

January 2007 – July 2008

i still remember what it felt like to swing beneath you,
noose tight at the base of my jaw, pale blue
lungs empty except for rasping excuses of your repercussions of the flesh
my flesh.

i never questioned why all i clung to was the breathing,
crippled toes wound tight on the mattress
white cinder block, the bubbled paint
anywhere but his eyes in their sockets, my sunken expression
grossly reshaping: why i tend to fuck with my eyes closed
because i had outgrown 'afraid' by not looking,
resigned myself to the dips of the ceiling, its silent cracks;
tiles don't need, they can't pucker
there are no elbows in plaster zigzags, their creases don't form shoulders
one stucco wall can become an obsession
when your legs gradually begin to stop kicking
i don't remember days or tremors or sounds, only the muffled cough of it snowing,
the mint green of the sink basin, the dull of my sores
i can't remember the 'no's or his last words but i remember the smells
a blank face, my grim body
some nights when the shower bled onto the bathroom rug, i could still feel it gushing:
the sting, the panicked heaves erupting from my sides
the pound of the overhead fan, its violent throb beating into my arms
as i shrunk down to where the waves of the drain could hit my back,
tight corners balled into a fist, spitting tears and gagging,
trying not to know what i may never remember
pain was never in the school books with brown paper covers,
their captions cradled with strangers, how to keep a drink in your hands
what they didn't tell me about was the bricks, the hate in every day noises
you trace a finger and it's there again: the bite at my collar,

the scream of my knees, feet dangling
my memories are of cut-off air—but where were his hands
the loosening of my gut at my back—was your hunger worth my rot
textbooks don't tell you how his palms worked down into the skin where they fixate on your pulse
and deprive you of it
mucus stuck to my lips, kicks pinned to the ground
religion never explained how a man can creak beneath you,
close himself around your hips and dissolve, fear caught in the rope,
eyes glued to the door frame, the shadow next to your feet
the hollow crush in your ribcage when he shudders
my pride wasn't dragged from a gun
he whispered hail marys and i kept silent
he read the bible on his arms
welcomed numbers,
my numbers. my statistics.
school girls reading their homework,
highlighting our bruises, taking notes on decaying ribs
printed examples never mentioning break downs,
the bloody drip of a feeling,
the greed they breach with their eyes, the definitions of rape
prayer didn't settle his cravings, confession didn't lull his ache,
keep the gore from within me, cotton taste at the back of my mouth
'shame' isn't a symptom; it's the need to swallow five times more than you should to push it back,
three walls sinking into your wrist
i don't remember what it felt like to lie beneath him,
clothed thighs tight at the base of my hips, pinned down
throat empty except for the rasping screams of him basking in the flesh
my flesh.
i never questioned why all i clung to was the breathing,
lips pressed to the blue screen
the gloss of the walls, the beat of his static
anywhere but the bulge of his rosary beads, my spinal column
grossly reshaping: why i never believed in god