

THE LITTLEST ANGELS

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The Littlest Angels

“The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels, but every time we think we have measured our capacity to meet a challenge, we look up and are reminded that that capacity may well be limitless.”

- The West Wing, Jed Bartlet, “20 Hours in America”

I. December 14, 2012

I imagine the decision when it was made
was much like a domino tipped
ever so slightly by the hissing exhale
that escaped between the pinched lips of someone in pain.
The teetering bones leaning just the right way, at just the right moment and the effect much the same as the aftershocks
of a supernova.
Stardust of those moments scattered across the kaleidoscope of the sky.
At night, I close my eyes and see mammoth giants quiet with resolution circling their young
as a lone wolf tears flesh to ribbons
and the vinyl white tile is soaked crimson.
I hear their cries of anguish, I watch
as they refuse to move.
I wonder, how do you stop an exploding man?

II. April 20, 1999

Twenty turns around the sun
and yet we have remained stagnant. We are complacent
in the fight for our lives. When we do square up
it is as if the strike from the right hook surprises us. Despite the fact that the same move just bloodied our nose. The marks have only just turned a faint hue of
green as the next swatch of purple
blooms on the line of our jaw.
We refuse to take a new stance.
We refuse to learn from countless losses.
And so we find ourselves
constantly knocked to the mat
in a pool of our own blood.

III. Bedtime stories, gone too far

You're older now, a parent yourself.
And with each new story
you pull her closer,
holding her heart close to yours
the rhythm of the two beats a constant anchor to keep you tethered to reality
to the here, and now
as the darkness does its best to pull you down too.
And you bite your lip
so hard you draw a drop of blood,
as she tilts her chin towards the sky.
Until the pale blue meets yours and
with all the seriousness that a seven-year-old could be expected to muster
she asks,
"Where did my friends go?"

IV. A Rainy Day in May, Yesterday

It is raining outside.
Slowly at first and then an onslaught,
as if God made the decision that it was best to wash it all away — a second flood; another chance
to start anew.
And all you can do is sit
clutching the pillow to your chest
and hitting refresh
to catch the world, or at least their world
burning down around you, around them
in real time.
A thousand miles away you can hear the
shadows of screams, splintering the sky with an explosion of shards. And you feel this newest
affront as if it were
your own.
As if it were the exploding memories of
your friends,
your family,
scattering to the heavens.

In Memoriam on April 20, 2019