

Rosemary Harkrader

Of Achilles

The soul of Achilles becomes you.

There is a purpose somewhere inside  
that perforates through your blood and skin  
wafting around you unmistakably  
yet inconceivable to those who do not quest.

Intelligence burns through your eyes, intense.

Black and white, it entices or repulses.

I draw closer. I love what is inside of you.

How complex it is, you are.

If only I could know every secret you hold

I would lie contented.

But restlessly I dream dreamless dreams,

I must know the Truth.

I sort through broken pieces, fogged with deceit

from those false teachers

too confident or proud to truly comprehend.

Their lives flicker in the musty oblivion

of a cell.

They stink of rancid oil and deception.

Habits like coal suit them better than  
glorious armor.

But you wear it well.

In the light of day, I return to your side,  
just to listen.

I cannot get enough of your riddles,  
your passion, your eyes.

Your words are salty.

The grains sting and cleanse.

Though I have not the same vision, do not reject me  
or I shall lose my only star in this dark place.

I wish I was more. I grow slowly.

Forgive me if you must.

Give me that life-light you possess.

My entire being thirsts for it.

Though I cannot yet grasp the Truth,

I surrender myself unashamedly to it

regardless of the consequences.

As for you, I offer myself to your

influence and instruction.

And perhaps in my naiveté, I can

add to your wisdom

For even Achilles could have been perfected.

Tim Barzditis

Marlboro Lights

Behind their high school, kids with their cigarettes  
lean against the freckled chestnut bricks,  
scratch their elbows on the coarse grit of  
the blocks, flick their gray and black  
ash from the tips as they  
smolder

Light wisps spiral skyward, gray ghosts  
projected in front of the cold autumn  
sun, the smell of black with a hint of mint  
rises from the rolled tobacco between  
their fingers that will  
smolder

A coughing chorus, hands on their knees,  
backs hunched, trying to give their best old-  
man impression, wiping maturity from the sides  
of their mouths. Their cherries burn bright  
while their lives smolder

Diana Clark

Locked

I could write you a thousand letters, suns, and portraits. Pretty things we hang from ceilings made of origami pieces. I could sail you across a nation and back, all for the chance to scribble words into the palms of your hands. I could sing into your ear, laced with feathers, whisper words of nonsense that you will later write into song. I could smoke a ceilings worth of lullabies; the toys filtering in and out of kaleidoscopes the way dreams do in the morning. I could bend the bars of a bird cage and watch them fly, the smell of cloves still fresh in our nostrils as they swim into a blue that even fish would envy. I could dance through the smoke from the wood stove, stark naked, drenched in nothing but dew drops and dreams. I could hang on your every word or let them fall to the linoleum like sand; collect them all up when you're not looking. I could trace where your tattoo will be, blue scales and summer. I could collect the fragments from your heart and mine; patch them together like an old friend and skip the gauze all together. I could lie in the grass under your swing and watch the wood work fade away. Lemonade and honey suckle will never not sustain us. I could grow tomatoes where your heart used to be, dripping red with luster and mending all our seams. I could make connections, color in the transparencies, read the grain in the paper instead of the words themselves.

I could do all those things or lock the door.

Key's under the mat.