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the last day of the rest of my life - (bene valence)

patrick wm luther

Vanderbilt University Community Engaged Research Core Advisory Council

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Cover Page Footnote

Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research Learning Healthcare; Community Engaged Research Core

the last day of the rest of my life
(bene-valence)

double scarlet blood, vision sparks light blue
like pop rocks in this mouth
with its glass teeth and cotton tongue
salivating to swallow me.
bright white light, i'm tubed,
in a snowed enclosure of my aura
like my mother's embrace and her mother's before her
when she hugged the all of me.

*no sweetie, let me help you
i'm taking good care, too
don't fight me please, Boo,*

as i was loved to say when i was an earthly savior
wielding a siren.

am i now holding myself,
as the angel amnion once held me, and angels evermore?

marching against the entropy is this valence
of every good
that ever enveloped my life,
needled into the universe of my bone
are tubes for the red juice of existing,
red as cherry kool-aid frozen in plastic popsicle cases
bought with S&H green stamps,
each arm home now to M.A.S.H. unit stories we watched around
a 3-channel television
snowy and scratchy at 2 am when I once awoke
with bone spurs, comforted by the man who last made
my mother happy.
the patio fashioned garage with the metal box making cold air
drones ten feet from state route 3,
as the soldiers return to Camp Drum from their battles
to face new ones
in the dripping hot moisture outside, we flash them peace signs
reminding me
the inside is comfortable.

in the window is a reflection of the groovy multi-colored
Utica Club bar light spinning with my mother's last pure joy.
how did it do that?

face

velvet

church

daisy

red

oh-two-sats! with hyperventilation
reduces the size of white and gray matter
purposefully now, not a conscious decision to stop
growing, loving, caring, helping,
as humans do.

the volume needed large and small
this immediate paradox unconfused
among such amazing plumbers—these heroes—
arms and hands bored out large for the flood
of too much fluid, forcing my breath too fast
for normal times, too fast for grown-ups
just right for a child's form. simple and full and free
before we gave up on breathing too fast
and stopped respiring the fluid of life
in exchange for an executive function:
so overrated.

a Young's modulus devoid of compassion and love
lacks life's sweetest necessity.
you slice off my best fitting jeans.
my favorite black leather belt.
sacrificial strands now to the pressure of life
you give
the same pressure i once gave
when dreams of medicine
consumed my free lunches
your proficiency
double bagged, large bore ivs
oh two max wide open
shocking really, in threes
hemorrhagic, volumetric, cardiogenic,

bene-valent
life requires all of these
let me help you sweetie.

you pierced my tongue to give me air
not like a rebellious teen
but as a matter of rote course.
i wish you had pinched my ass instead,
like a thousand times before.
the person who roofied my jack & coke
not content to savor what could be seen
instead intent on inflicting a robbing a rolling or raping
maybe all three
i never read that trilogy,
it was done not well at all.

my pain now softened by bene-valence
like the benevolent stove arsonist
giver of liquid sunshine, perfect in craft
you bring breath
celebrating life, maybe the last day of the rest of mine.
but my love valence is fraught
shocked yet strong, clutching me in the present
bene-valence
peering at the bloody tubed carnage
brain dead, beautiful mind, a story that might always end in rhyme,
or dad jokes, the rapier wit entwined
is it gone forever now or just for a time?

i sign stacks of warnings for the opioids you're pushing
unlike the drugs from my youth, at the club in Atlanta,
the tea dance in Miami, Nashville's Kiss,
the ones that don't come with warnings or lawsuits for malfeasance.
their only bad medicine was failure to deliver
on their promise to help us forget how to breathe like an adult
and remind us how we all came here
for recess and naps.
do these come with a companion Narcan dispenser
or did you sign away your honor with your promises for peddling narqs?
these tic tacs are soothing my mind
and the 27 staples pinched tightly across

my scalp,
much more soothing than fast and loose “Opioid Marsha”
who sold her everafter for cash on the backs
of thousands of Tennessee souls,
much less tightly than her long, bent Cruella DeVille fingers
clenching her kickbacks.
i see her as Greed peering briefly in all of life’s immoral abysses
and her own abyss of ineptitude, ignorance and ambivalence
just long enough to crowd her grotesque garter
with cash from her side hustle.

or maybe it’s just another vivid dream
surreal, reserving space for life.
space I may need for my trauma brain.
are all my memories cast overboard?
tossed in a sea with no beginning or end
i’m confronted by the omni presents
of the unavoidable known
to’ve slumbered amongst my dead benevolent
in warm deep crimson orbits
where a bene-valence holds hands
no force could possibly unclasp.

draw ten past eleven.

normal saline kills,
didn’t you know?
what if I need that 1 percent?
African rhino, dromedary camel,
numbers and words, in order, don’t ramble,
wiggle your toes, squeeze my hand, what’s up doc?
i’m by the Black River of my broken, hungry childhood
on a day so cold,
the sun was all I needed, cozy on the snowy bank
of the Black River
cuddled by the wood of the hollowed-out tree
instead of a father’s love.

face

velvet

church

daisy

red

you're unimpressed with my perfect performance.
the indifference as familiar as the riverbank.
didn't you know Geminis are always on stage
even in death of brain and body
our charm breeds love and compassion, selfishly.
we rage
to receive as much as we give, when we want it at all.
it's obvious you'd rather not be here.
jilted maybe, and maybe your mother
like her mother, your grandmother, jilted her too.
or were jilted.
outside the grasp of the valence
the atoms of love's orbit,
unhappily you say you can't do anything for me
no hug, no pull, no tug, no love.

On the last day of the rest of my life
my melon careened off a steel stanchion
in the parking lot
from aloft the balcony above
at the Lipstick Lounge
where so many foggy nights the tenuous hopes
of my humanly beloved
braved clumsily forward
afraid of the truth of their heavy secrets,
but more scared of the loneliness
of not being adored
even within the bene-valence of smoke and kin and
whiskey and gin.
perhaps i fell harder
than your luggage
hit the driveway
of your ex
when they launched it satisfyingly from their balcony,
its seams bursting like a morning sadness sobbing

exposing your secrets to the world.
for fifteen minutes you assault my brain
like it's Normandy and
i just want to be free from the malfeasance of indifference.
face, velvet, church, daisy, red, I said.
the trauma external, not inside my head
and the soul of healing here from you
wittingly, dead.
outside of my mother's womb
and all our mothers' before
there's no safer, content truth
than knowing i'm trapped in the world's bene-valence.
and nothing is new
and everything is.