



These Things Happen by Adam Deutsch

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**A Car Poem Beginning with a Line  
from Adam Clay**

There is nothing holy about the intangible,  
except, of course, everything. Sweeter intentions,  
alive all day, and for a while there, in brisk  
contributions to momentum sea-ward,  
I was moving right on through divine  
ethers, grazing in composure, nothing  
kept down. I was the blast of an interior sun.  
I'd lost my horse, but stayed saddled.

## Rainy Season

Everyone's pushing propositions with printed signs,  
and those fingers held up to the low clouds.

These months smell more like home than the others.  
They weave unbroken bones like a pair of carrots  
tangled up. It's a tall girl getting hugged by the little guy.

Any minute now, this traffic light is going to turn  
blue, is going to realize its own shine has a cannon  
ball of boiling water, a rushing wave  
from the hung sockets above the avenue.

One stroke after another, our health is magnificently  
dawdling. Flawlessly meandering. But it's a series  
of other reasons that bring us so close to combustion:  
today, our teeth are so clean from chewing greens.

I pull buttons through slits below collars.  
Peppermint bugs spray lines the porch door.

I've gotten to reading a bio on prolonged suicides  
who dissipate in the living room. The furnace  
is their train, riding ghost tracks of picked-over bones.

It's a pained light we read by. I don't die today. The reason  
is a devotion to joys. I have priorities, and garlic  
roasting in terracotta domes, and a refund  
to cash in from the state. My ass got soaked

by the chair cushion, unfolded over night, and dries  
while you might not arrive. But I want you  
with me: a desire, hurled like good sense  
to the ceiling vaults. This makes the baby laugh.

You want a throbbing tension: it's not death.  
It's funny. Take a sip, and let it spout from your nose.

Let's remember why we're here: I hadn't  
somersaulted, so I did, and my shoulders  
twitched an ache. My body has drizzled  
at least a few healthy habits and motions  
we can fill right back up.

Come with me! We have these chores  
demanding tools with long sticks. But lookie!  
California wants us to have these puddles!  
We make a game of the splashing, or save  
up some in a bottle to spray at a stag horn!  
The air-plant man says to put it in shade,  
and the world isn't ever dark for long,  
and it'll reach for the sun, just like our arms  
filled with ink and potential, stretch from our eyes  
surely still closed, but they snap wide, are clean,  
and we play for hours in the dirt of God,  
gather twigs, poke at the dead things  
and run away!

## Descriptor

*for Xavier Robinson*

These are fingers that cannot  
feel ink on the book's page,  
pressed, but they run the hills  
and sloped lines in our skins.  
Blood lifts these lines. A geyser  
-like pressure presses hard  
then calms under a fleshed ceiling  
from the whole night's rest.  
So many visions are sewn in  
to trundling beating beauty.

Your father's was not the art  
of tragedy that comes from, say,  
the fired gun. Nor are there scars  
from glowing wire hangers.  
These shapes were tucked under,  
into, us with a machine. It made  
compassionate ligatures from small pokes  
more curious sensations  
than burning kinds of pain. Each  
a young child, exploding to share,  
pulling at your cuff. Come here.  
Come and take a look. Lookie  
what I made. You've got to see this.

## **Punching Out**

So, that vow of silence  
I took at lunch? Broke it  
croaking back to a toad  
trapped in the electrical  
box, pulsing  
with joy in the sprinkler,  
timed to soak the grass  
in sunlight.

Which long gone event  
taught me to note  
a cop car's shape  
from so many  
blocks away?

The late mornings  
tuff my head.  
One might suspect  
I've been running.

## **In Ithaca Once**

I left her, barely alive  
up in the rental, studying  
our physics above the garage.  
A BMW sidecar was flipped over  
next to that loyal desk I stole  
from a university department.

That landlord had his tea, found  
a notebook in a top drawer,  
called collect, mailed it  
beyond confine: California.

All those tight rope bridges  
daring city planning officials  
pulled across the gorges  
had nothing to do with it.  
We just froze like smelt.

And then, that one pizza place  
with free delivery through midnight  
locked up, the three ovens  
all vanished in morning.



## Kilned

A monarch was creamed  
on the radiator along the way,  
splayed, dried, cooked  
in summer and onward air.  
I found her when I monkeyed  
with the wiper fluid motor wire.  
It's a tight spot. We've all  
been sandblasted, hosed, searching  
for the right tool in the box  
to perform that precise operation.  
These things just happen. A burn  
from an onion made hot  
in turkey's juicy sizzle  
then fished out with a spatula  
and not blown on long enough:  
it went mostly into my mouth  
and what hung out fought too hard  
at last before going cool,  
and caramelized. That is  
it was made, naturally,  
sweet, and brought finally forth  
and all its fire's now a part of my face.

## The Temperature Drops

All your dreams begin  
and end in the belly  
of a jet plane  
humming above condos

rotating out of flight  
fatigue  
in the V of ducks  
along an escape route.

We embrace through the city's  
implosion, all that matter  
making a shell  
that lines our backs.

## **Paving Day**

They're caking my block  
says a yellow tag,  
and if I invest in a pass  
the bus will send me  
over the valley  
in under forty minutes.

A dream worth remembering:  
six living heads, stitched up  
at the neck holes,  
voicing recipe tips.  
Place them in the crockpot,  
they suggest, torn herbs  
with dash pepper, leave  
the lid alone over night.  
They've given their bodies  
so we'll be fed. Chopped  
nightshade fills their cheeks.

My house is a tiny isle,  
surrounded by municipal pain  
and waste. A small crop and I  
breathe a foreign dust,  
our effort to adapt.

## Pre-War

Bicycles stacked in this basement add  
up to either eighty dollars in scrap  
or a monkey bar obstacle course  
to the damn water main, frozen again.  
We thrash down lumber steps  
for lessons on how to sweep, monkish  
below clouds, shingle, gutter weaving  
maple saplings, pores of stone,  
locust-shells-in-waiting dirt.  
There is life within single panes, sitting up  
in the front room colored like carnage in a barn.  
We had some peace and lucky breaks,  
in seeping wind through window seals  
that kept the tiny world dry.  
Noise carries through space, dust,  
with simple grace of a plane holding on,  
then letting go of fat man and little boy.

## **The Center for Personal Growth is Next Door to Cremation Services**

Tim brings his wife  
to the courtyard  
in a stainless steel egg,  
reckoning she  
could use the air.  
I've got one a dash  
of friend in a small vase,  
and Murphy's got one too,  
sets out a bronze cube  
bearing a sunken cross.  
He stores it away  
near canned pears  
in a desk fan box.  
His old partner.  
A business associate.  
An old dog. A doc.  
We're of a people  
who keep absence  
near. Handy  
as duct tape.  
The ground  
is for a different kind,  
with fierce ideas  
on remaining whole.

## **“He Was A Murder”**

*for Meghan Curley*

She thinks  
the pupil means  
a life or more  
was taken  
from him.

I believe a man  
was a billowing  
cluster of crows  
who've gone away.

Adam Deutsch lives in San Diego, teaches college composition and writing, and has work recently or forthcoming in *Coconut*, *Thrush*, *Spinning Jenny*, and *Jelly Bucket*. He is the Poet-in-Residence at AleSmith Brewing Company, and the publisher at Cooper Dillon Books.

Versions of the poems in here have appeared in *Caldera Culture Review*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Arsenic Lobster*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Simliar Peaks*, *Spitton*, *Indigest*, and *Jelly Bucket*.



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