

twelve months

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A lot can happen in 365 days.

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January

Raw fingertips gnawed by the cold,
Bitten lips bitten blue and bleeding,
But only enough to get a taste.

I am a thoughtless void, empty and
Dead, like the corpses of trees that
Stand firm at concrete's edge,
Sentinels of a Spring that still feels so far from me.

I am drifting, to and fro— a flake of snow—
Til I settle against the gray of the sky,
Or sheets, or matter, quivering
Restlessly in its cage of bone, beneath
The blanket of fog and fever.

Somewhere, beyond, I can feel it: a spark.
Mine, if I could just reach it. But the world
Is heavy in January, and I dutifully march on.

Raw fingertips gnawed by the cold,
Bitten lips bitten blue and bleeding,
But only enough to get a taste.

February

Twenty-eight, twenty-eight
Days of asphalt rivers.
Aimlessly, I tread,
And look up at dark skies
Or dark eyes, and ask
“Who will you be in the morning?”
The doom and gloom of the irony
Between the beginning and end,
Diffused beneath the streetlamp’s glow,
I’ve lost track of everything.

Twenty-eight, twenty-eight
Days are spent in motion.
Sour and sweet and weak knees,
How am I even walking?
I opened up the cardboard box
Only to take a peek,
But out poured the old wounds,
And fresh blood,
A tempest of breaks and mistakes.

Twenty-eight days of change.
Twenty-eight days of you, me, us, and them.
Memories and I’m back again.

Twenty-eight days of being alive.
Twenty-eight days is not enough time.

March

I tell myself this is important,
That's why I continue.
But this month feels blank:
An indication of a wider issue.
Have thirty-one days already become
An exercise in executive dysfunction?
I stare at the emptiness on the page,
I scribble down my feelings, frantic.
So many retroactive thoughts,
Crammed onto each line so tight
That they spill into the margins.

These gray days are marked by
Blank space on the calendar
and my blistered feet,
From walking in endless circles
On the verge of tears.
If you would just look into my eyes
And tell me the truth,
Then maybe I could finally write
About something happy.

I battle with demons I did not create,
And I can only stare at the horizon.
I march on.
My feet hurt, my eyes sting,
But I keep moving forward,
Because what is the alternative?

April

Nothing but rain pours from the clouds.
Dark drops cling to my skin,
The sticky sweet syrup of Avril and cyanide.
I drink this poison,
Relinquish me to saccharine surrender.

Surrender me to the gray of the sky.
Another thirty days pass,
Of turmoil and torment
As I watch my own hands wrench away
All hopes and dreams.

Away, away I slide into bliss
That I cannot convince myself I deserve.
Maybe I do?
If I listen to the currents
Flowing between the folds of my brain,
I know this storm is almost over,
Though I dare not bring myself to say
I have weathered it.

What is left of me after thirty days of rain?
Eroded, I grow tired of the life I lead.
But the universe explodes behind your eyes,
And mine, and all I see is the starlight that made me.

I should stay focused
On something other than
The gray skies,
But the beautiful tragedy is
That my emotional revelation

Is instant gratification,
And you ask me to wait for life to start,
But all I can ask you is “When?”

May

Maybe I should have expected this.
They do say it always gets worse,
Before it gets better.
But how was I supposed to know
What do to, even when you showed me
Exactly who you were?
You said I knew what I signed up for,
And I thought that maybe

But “maybe” is the problem, isn’t it?
Whatever May would be was lost when
I “made” you check that box,
Tickmarks on theoretical pieces of paper
That may or may not ever exist.
But you took what you said you were “owed”
And then asked me why I was crying.
Did you forget how badly I was shaking?

You felt entitled.
To my fear, to my body.
That’s why you cried, too,
When you said
“Can’t you see, I have to do this?”

You said I was always free to leave.
But you made sure to take as much as possible
Before I walked out the door, didn’t you?

Maybe I should have listened
When you said who you were.
But I thought that, maybe

June

Of whirlwind June,
I took no notes.
From blistering memory,
I recall what I can.

It began in darkness:
Trauma's haze drawing across
Quivering eyes, blinding them to all
But the singular purpose of survival.

This time is different,
I tell myself.
This time is different,
I promise,
Though it is a suspiciously
Familiar song and dance.

Nights spent wound tight,
Wracked with sobs,
Cursing cruelty and uncertainty
Churned into apparition days,
Where I drifted between moments,
Never daring to leave a mark.

The hope would rise within me like smoke,
And dissipate just as quickly:
Ethereal, intangible, unpredictable.
I never allowed myself the luxury
Of letting down my guard.

But whirlwind June

Did not end in darkness,

Despite the mess

It seems to have made.

A year of experience I have gained,

And with this new age,

A new self is heralded in.

July

In July,
There's no lie
When I say that I've changed.
I glance over my shoulder
At last year's me:
Domestication,
Then devastation;
A critical metamorphosis.
Look at what can change
When we open our eyes
And charge headlong into days,
All 365.

In July,
There's no lie
When I say that I've arrived,
Finally, to a happy place.
Awake,
Without fear,
A distinct lack of post-nightmare tremors.
I marvel at my reality
And lay down my head
For my much-deserved rest.
The danger has passed.
At long last,
My eyelids come to a close,
The weight of existence
No longer their burden to bear.

The face in the mirror
Is definitely still mine.

But who will I be
By next year's July?

August

The final vestiges of summer's lazy days
Disseminate through the atmosphere.
The equinox looms,
Or so the temperature tells me.
A Pagan winter for those at the Equator.
Here I am,
At one more conclusion,
Or perhaps two,
Or three, or four.
I stand by, anticipating,
Holding the august air in my lungs.
Letting it burn like the sun's kisses,
Or yours, on my skin. Or the smoke
That in January, belonged to you,
But I foolishly find more excuses
To hold within my chest.
I see us, vivid,
Odd little wildflowers,
Bunched together,
Poking out in some places,
Doing our best to make sense of the chaos.
We turn our faces to the light.

September October

Today I thought that
 I am quite like a mother dolphin,
 Dragging the corpse of my
 Inner child, keening.
 It is long past saving,
 Yet I cannot bring myself
 To let it sink and meet its Fate:

Crab meat.
 Or rather, meat for the crabs.
 This is restitution for being
 A textbook Cancer.

If you'll forgive the
 Grotesque marine imagery,
 You will find my underlying
 Cry for help in that
 The last two months
 Have become nothing but
 A hazy series of highs
 Blurring together in
 Woolly temporality.

This poem is dangerously close
 To swapping marine for pastoral.

Many of the triumphs
 Are suspended in my mind
 Within the black ooze of
 My tortured artist's despair.
 It rises with the moon,

Manufactures whispers
Where there are none.

Just press your forehead
Against mine again,
And look into my eyes
And remind me.

Remind me that the blurry days
Were also good ones, too.

November

November is when I finally say,
“I need to see a therapist
To help me with these mood swings!”
The tears streaming down my face
Suggest I still have not unpacked
The last eleven months of my life.
You would think that someone
Who has lived sixteen places
In seven years would be better
At emptying a suitcase.
I am so ridiculously happy these days,
Except when I’m not,
And god damn, I love you,
But November is already half over.
“Hush,” I say to the me in the mirror.
“Be gentle with yourself.”
“Baby steps.” “Hold yourself close.”
“You do not inflict pain.”
“Take a deep breath.”
I’m exhausted from decorating my brain
With Christmas lights instead of thinking
About how I’ve dissociated myself into
An eating disorder.
Or maybe I’m just terrified that,
After all that I’ve been through,
I’ll never be able to return to normal.
But then you place the cheeseburger in front of me.
You smile that stupid smile.
And all is well.

December

Twelve months ago the color blue
Did not so much as remind me of you,
But of brain fog, bloody lips, and fingertips.
As “mild” landscape-through-van-window blurred,
A thought occurred, luminescent:
December feels like blue.
Blue hung between Christmas strands,
Lining both sides of our street.
Blue in the midnight glow of the karaoke bar,
Where only all of us missed a few beats.
Christmas itself was blue, too,
But the number of song references here
Is already too embarrassing.
I guess the fact that blue is your favorite color
Means that this is a love poem.