

The Sun Has No Spine

By Georgina M. Cox

My rapist has a girlfriend
And my stomach wants him out,
Though two months should be long enough
To cauterise the doubt.

It claws against my ribcage,
Acid rising through my chest.
He gets another pair of arms.
I get another night without rest.

He said that he still loved me,
Said he'd wait if that's what it took.
Now she wears him like a medal
While she laughs at how I look.

She thinks that she has won him.
Like I lost and she got first.
God, I wish that she could see
What being loved by him was worth.

I won the hands that held me
When I begged for them to stop.
I won apologies by morning
When the crying wouldn't drop.
I won learning how to leave my body
When my body wasn't mine.
I won no becoming nothing
If he crossed it one more time.
I won years of making excuses.
I won terror dressed as trust.

I won loving my abuser
Til my love began to rust.

And still he gets to kiss her
With the mouth that lied to me.
Still he gets to call it loving.
Still I pay the entry fee.

That's the part that fucking kills me:
He gets touched
And I still flinch.

He gets new beginnings.
I get memories by the inch.

He gets photographs and laughter.
I get sick remembering mine.

Morning comes for both of us.
The sun has no fucking spine.
It shines across his bedroom
Like it never saw me crawl,
Like a man can rape a woman
And the sky won't care at all.

And she thinks she's won the lottery.
Maybe once,
I did as well.

I just didn't know the jackpot
Was a private kind of hell.

My rapist has a girlfriend.
There, I said it again.

I said it and the ceiling did not come down.
No biblical animal crawled from the sea.
No judge arrived.
No great red hand
Pointed from the clouds and said
That one.

He just got a girlfriend.
Like men do.
Like he forgot to buy milk
And not
Like I still occasionally leave my body
Because he taught it
That being inside itself
Was dangerous.

He told me he *loved* me.
He told me he would *wait* for me.
Which is funny,
Because apparently
Forever
Is roughly the distance
Between one woman saying no
And another woman saying yes.

And I know what you are thinking.
Why do you care?
He hurt you. He violated you.

There were things whispered about him
That should have made love
Rot in my mouth.

I should be celebrating.
I should be dancing barefoot
On the grave of every good thing
I ever believed about him.

Instead,
I am crying
Because the monster
Found someone to call him darling.

What an embarrassing organ the heart is.
No moral compass whatsoever.

You can present it with evidence,
Photographs, testimony,
The body itself.
And still, it will ask,
But why wasn't I enough?

As though being enough
Ever stopped a man from doing something terrible.

As though goodness
Is body armour.

As though I could have been
Prettier, quieter, hairless, smaller-nosed, less difficult, more fuckable, less human.
And somehow
He would have developed a conscience.

Now she talks about me online.
And I wonder
What parts of me he fed her first.

Did he season my insecurities
Before serving them?

Did he say,
She hates her nose.
She worries about this.
She cries when you touch here.

Be gentle—
No,
Not with her.
With the information.
It bruises easily.

Maybe this is intimacy to him.
Two women and one of them
Doesn't know she's holding the knife
By the handle he gave her.

And the worst thing—
He seems happy.

There should be a law of nature against this.

Men who ruin women
Should not get good mornings.

They should not get inside jokes
Or warm hands
Or somebody's head
On their shoulder.

The earth should recognise them.
Dogs should growl.
Milk should curdle.
Flowers should close when they walk past.
But nothing happens.

The sun, spineless thing,
Rises for him too.

And I am furious at morning
For its neutrality.

I am furious that somewhere,

Somehow, he is being touched
Tenderly.

While I am still learning
That tenderness
Does not always turn into a trap.

My rapist has a girlfriend.
There, I said it *again*.
And my stomach has become an animal trying to escape me

It claws upward.
Acid in the throat.
Jaw full of spit.
Body saying
Get it out, get it out, get it out.

But there is nothing in me
I can vomit
That will make him unhappen.

I am still finding pieces of that night
Under my fingernails.

The body is such a disgusting archivist.
It files everything.
A smell.
A mattress.
A sentence.
A place where a hand was not invited.

Then years later
Opens the cabinet
And dumps the whole fucking thing
Onto the floor.

Meanwhile,
He gets to be clean.
He gets to put on a nice shirt.
He gets photographed
Beside another woman
Without the photograph developing
With RAPIST
Burned through his forehead.

There is no visible rot.
That is what makes me sick.
I think evil should leak.
I think men who do terrible things
Should sweat black water.

Their teeth should loosen when they lie.
Their girlfriends should taste grave dirt
When they kiss them.

Something should give them away.
A smell.
A stain.
A swarm of flies
Following politely behind.

But he looks normal.
Of course he does.

Monsters were invented with horns
Because nobody wanted to admit
How often they have nice smiles.

How often somebody loves them.
How often they are invited inside.

My rapist has a girlfriend,

And she hates me.
This would almost be funny
If it were not so perfectly designed
To make a woman lose her mind.

He hurt me
And somehow
I am the woman being discussed.

I am the ugly one.
The bitter one.
The embarrassing ex.

Here is the little catalogue of everything I feared
That made me less of a woman.

Go on.
Make jokes.

He already discovered
How useful shame is
When you want a woman
To distrust her own reflection.

Maybe they laugh.
That thought makes bile
Crawl into my mouth.

Not because I want him back.
I want the opposite of him back.

I want the girl who did not know yet.
I want my body
Before it learned that no
Can apparently become a philosophical debate
Inside the wrong man's hands.

I want every version of myself
I had to kill
Just to keep living afterward.

And he—
He gets to manufacture
A second childhood for himself
Where nothing bad ever happened
And I am simply
The hysterical woman
Outside the window.

Do you understand
How grotesque that is?

The butcher leaves the slaughterhouse
In a white shirt.
And the butchered meat
Has to explain the blood.

And still—
Still—
Some revolting little piece of me
Aches because he moved on.

I hate her for aching.
I want to pull that part of myself out
By the root
And hold it under running water.

Look.
Look at what he did to us.
Why do you miss being chosen?
By something that ate you?

She has no answer.
The heart is not intelligent.

It is just meat
With excellent publicity.

It sees him loving someone else
And forgets the evidence.

For one humiliating second
It asks
Why could he be good to her?
Why wasn't he good to me?

And there it is.
The maggot in the fruit.

Because some part of me still believes
Cruelty is something a woman earns.

That if I had been prettier–
Smaller–
Easier–
Smoother–
Less frightened–
Less myself–

He might have discovered a conscience between my thighs.

Nothing I could have offered would have
Reached inside him
And built the thing
He was missing.

Still,
There is a little girl
Somewhere in me
Sitting on the floor
With all the evidence around her
Asking, *begging*,

Why wasn't I loved enough to be spared?

And I don't know
How to explain to her
That love was never
The currency.

That he could have loved me
And hurt me anyway.
That perhaps,
He did love me,
In whatever ruined way you understand the word.

God.
I almost wish
I could believe you never did.
That would be nicer.
Instead I have to live
With the uglier possibility
That someone can love you and still destroy things in you.

What a foul little religion.
I am trying to spit it out.

He did not rape me
Because I failed
To be lovable enough.

He raped me
Because he was capable
of raping me.

There is no prettier sentence.
There is no metaphor
That disinfects it.

And if another woman loves him now,

Love is not bleach.
Her mouth cannot clean him.
Her body cannot acquit him.
Her happiness beside him
Does not crawl backward through time
And put my clothes back on.

It does not return my voice
To my throat.

It does not make my no suddenly audible.

So yes.
Maybe he is happy.
Maybe tonight someone loves him
And tells him
He is good.

The universe has permitted far
More obscene things.

But somewhere inside me
The animal is finally learning.

The animal is finally learning that
I am not sick because I lost him.

I am sick
Because the world keeps swallowing men like him whole
And calling them
Digestible.