

MELISSA CARL

From the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*

Wind-chime words, flaring words, words of atmosphere and resonance; words left ajar during hide-and-seek, or strewn like sunlight on a tree house floor, words cupped like creek stones in the hands of children, loosely loved. Words trapped like wrens in rural churches, words french-kissed from mouth to mouth. Words peering from under bridges, words bluing into bruise, rivers of words melting down. Words derived from Latin and Greek, lovely as rain and gondolas, left to wander, pale with longing. Words peeled like grapes to delicacy, words murmured on skin in half sleep, words hourglassed like Spanish flowers to bloom only once on Halloween. Words imagined from the courtyards of the ancient world, its peach-scented twilights and minarets, its calls to deeper feeling. Medieval words drawn and inked from the deaths of insects, words night-skyed into cold, made for portents and the throats of owls. Words that reek of hyacinth and wind, words of fallow, words of want, whispered in parlors and into wine. Words for injury and urge, slake and poison; words of alchemy and ruin. Brittle words meant for asylum and masquerade, the plastic lawn furniture of provincials, their rigid stances of mundane despair. Bamboo words, turned to flute. Words glimpsed like a bare leg under long, crushed-velvet skirts. Words from the grimoire that crush and swarm, voodoo-pinned on strangers' hearts. Reckless words, urgent words, the ones of wingbeat and violent plummet, the ones spoken like storms at dusk. Words pressed like lipstick onto envelopes no one keeps, scissored like valentines from stolen art. Noose words pulling at wrists and ankles. Aftermath words and quiver words, words of our wished-for disasters—moonlight and shipwrecks, the fates of oceans, our looking and our shame. Splintery hesitations. Message the caged songbird fortune-tells, picking cards from its master's deck.

**Artist and writer John Koenig has created a compendium of new words for emotions that lack definition in our formal language. Based on research of etymologies and standard meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and roots words, Koenig's inspired creations have received attention and interest as they have been shared through various forms of social media. This poem is intended as tribute to Koenig's work.*

Multiple-time Pushcart Prize nominee **Melissa Carl** has published work in a variety of publications including *Off the Coast*, *South Florida Poetry Review*, and *Writer's Digest's Poetic Asides*. In 2013 she was one of eighty-five participants in the *Found Poetry Review's* National Poetry Month Pulitzer Remix Project, producing thirty poems in thirty days using a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel as source material.

BLAISE ROSENTHAL

The Age, 2016
Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 54 in



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