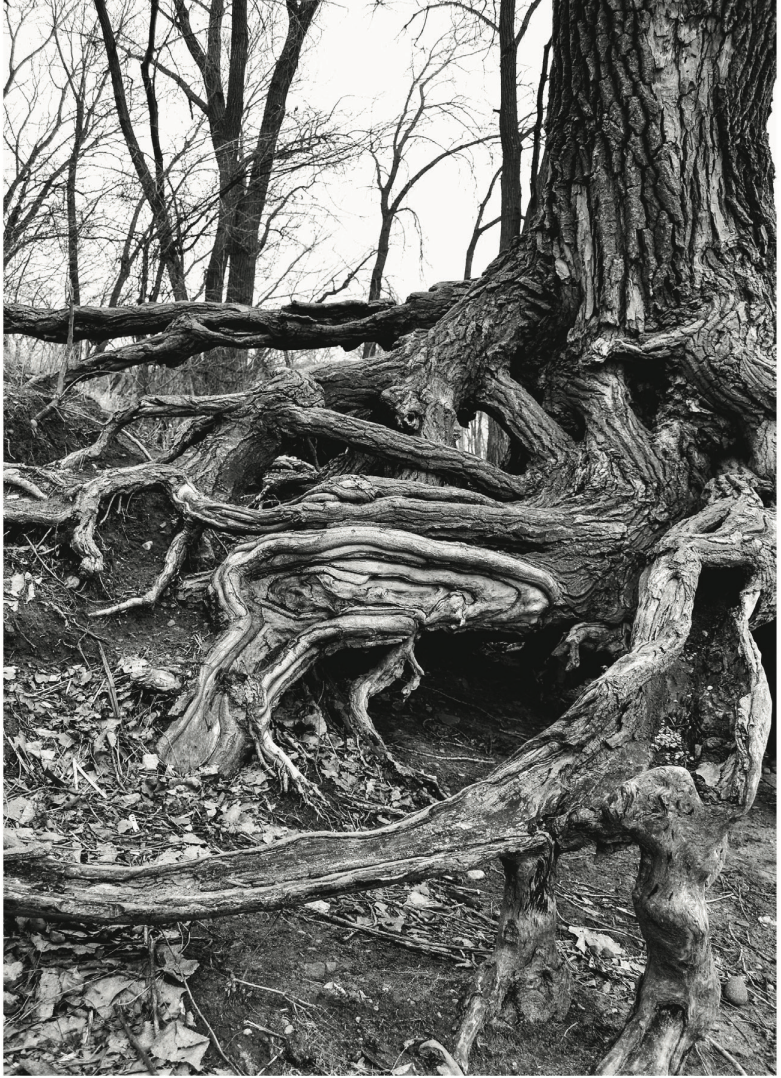


# Blood and Survivor



Haley Lasché

**Blood and Survivor**  
by Haley Lasché

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Chicago, USA, 2017

This Morning's Meditation: November 9, 2016

My despair is more itch than wound.  
It is possible to keep vigil without ceremony.

I have so much left to learn from love  
the way it points me to myself  
what I fear.

Love says "no" and love says  
"yes" sometimes  
both in each moment

sometimes—love—a silence  
so hard, my hands distract themselves  
afraid to do the work of my heart.

The maidenhair tree outside  
my window holds its hands as high as it can reach,  
raps against the pane  
dropping fans of gold  
leaves.

Wisdom knows  
they no longer serve  
its great ascension.

In Anticipation of January 20, 2017

I haven't lived through January yet.  
The silent crush of cold. To hold  
one's breath is formality.

You have to let it all go.  
An involuntary push  
will only get you to the next gasp.

I know this when I watch my neighbors  
run their engines, scrape their cars. Their dogs  
steaming windows and licking  
ice from the pads of their feet.

My lungs alarm my mind—  
Shut it out. Shut it out. Shut it all out—  
this is a world no longer safe  
for my brand of hope.

I could look for the lining in every moment  
if I submitted to the fantasy of ice sculptures  
constructed of overflowing gutters.  
But I know the damage that particular art inflicts  
on structure over time.  
We must be so careful with our art.

The smoke of our nation is still rising  
like the breath of the winter wood  
after a forest fire.

I have pulled the fire blanket over my head  
long enough to survive to the next.

I could use a little petrichor  
but it's not time for that now.

It is time for letting the frost do what it will  
for a little ice inside the lungs  
to tell my ribcage  
*here are the new boundaries.*

Blood and Survivor: January 30, 2017

*-for Sally Yates*

Feet sink into fresh ash. Hot earth. Rejection. A mind can slip away from itself. A body can feel older than every star. I see your face set soft against the flash. The pages of the newspaper singe at my fingertips.

Did Sylvia Plath know Eavan Boland would set the record straight? Did she know her mother love would survive? Plath's attachment to a body, to nature, to her children could overwhelm the mythology of archetype of in the willing eyes of witness to stand against a shadow. A madwoman sacrificing herself to fire.

Did Cleopatra know Stacy Schiff would denigrate Cicero his petty vendettas? Did she know she'd be chiseled from the molten rock of legend? Centuries later, a woman stands before us: blood and survivor.

History changes. Is changed by the will of the world. Keep walking forward. The world is almost new. In every telling still, a demagogue waits to spin golden yarn from red, to refract the truth.

Always in this light. The edges show a woman scorched, spinning herself away from reason, screaming down a mountain, destroying all within her wake.

But there were men who loved them.

There were men who held their courage as possibility. As truth.

This is not about men and women. This is not about martyrdom—certainly that slips through the cracks. This is action against fear. The conviction that precedes the action. The odyssey that ensues.

I hear their stories—I hear yours—and there is a tremor in my veins. I want to feel it in the earth's crust.



## Autumn Ash

The last of the autumn ash  
leaves on wings of February snow  
crosses the highway intersecting  
the insurance of our unison dreams  
where once they curled together in prayer

so few of our prayers have been answered of late

our dreams are vigilant beyond reason

a break in the storm is distant  
clouds strong arm the tallest trees  
their limbs fight from ripping  
away at the roots.

Isn't this me in every moment?

## Impossible Children

They follow the night out of the harbor  
their eyes, waking the reflection of sand  
beneath their feet, as though magic was still alive, my  
my. What tenderness is lost  
in conviction, like apprehension.

It's so hard to avoid being a contronym of oneself  
adding in the same moment what we've tried to shed.

The door is open. The glass is clean. You can see  
what this room has to offer. Or walk  
to the edge of the water, like me  
fearful of the binary life it looks like I've chosen.

Yes. We are all impossible children  
wanting to please and needing autonomy,  
thinking that both are attainable or neither.

Jesus, help me stop. These are all the same words.

## This Is How I Understand a Black Hole

Step on a balloon hidden beneath the carpet  
the balloon erupts and the contents of your childhood  
burst through the carpet pad down the shoulder of the stair

Where the creek bed trickled is a flood rivaling  
the end of a Texas drought a honey  
comb boiled over the burners of a glass fire  
betraying the doorways to small pipes

You find someone breathing here  
someone is found to carry life  
but found is not the right word  
and neither is appointed this may be akin  
to infested or maybe unhinged

And if you find that someone here  
look into his eyes and feel how cold they work  
how far they see into your soul which is flattening itself  
under his shoe when you should be sleeping you are trying  
to pull the parts of him together or at least find the frame  
of the puzzle leaving a heap of pieces junked in the middle

But maybe there are too many pieces  
maybe there are not enough and everything  
is trying though not allowed to escape

Now an unwelcome surprise party  
drains the room to somewhere  
dismantling everything lovely everything soft  
everything too bright to place on the tongue

## Two Stories

Here are two stories of a babe  
breached in his mother's belly.

In one story, the death of a hero.  
In another, the birth of a villain.

There are angels in both of these  
stories, pulling mythology into the body  
of the speaker.

Mythology is just a fancy  
explanation of our fears.

I am afraid of my heart.  
How about you?

My heart has hoped for penance.  
How about you?

Aren't you the breached babe  
whose voice emerged whole from water?

I watched your birth  
your lying mouth

your twin.  
Two truths circling.  
Vultures don't need the wind.

The day is just beginning.

## Politic Performance Art

Oh, isn't that the way I sing? To blame my foes for all I've given? A shock of hair. A bit of dermis. A clip of nail to cast the spell. Yet I am still. What comes next seems out of place. My fingers are neither automatic nor directed. I'm too quiet inside my own mind. I don't know the woman in whom I sit.

I am complacent in my pain, like Abramović under the knife in '74, two years before Carter. She had so much power to say "no" when the first man pressed a blade to her skin, a thorn.

She had so much power in her refusal to stop him. To refrain from saying "no."

To bear witness is a power, to let another's sanity spin hard against the room. And she, all the while glowing, more solid in her conviction, her purity. The kinetic energy in her veins recycled air, prepared her for her next movement, the next 30 years.

I refrain from "no" some mornings. I am zealous about the quiet. There is a list I keep. You will atone. The oil under my blood, slow and seeping. I let you roll me over with whatever tools you want. I too feel powerful in watching. I like to let you think you are wearing me down. I like to think of where you've cut me, where I scar.

The skin toughens at a healed wound. The mind moves from parishioner to priest. A slash of sky opens for mourners who don't close their eyes to tears.

And I have cried.

Enough.

## The Whole Whale

We feel lucky in moments we've survived the heart  
saved the whole whale: oil, fire.

We build a tent out of bones  
the red red red of shadow inside a canyon  
keeping us close enough  
though our desires scream: splinter.

An equal love spreads over the tongue  
holding us down; guiding us back.

We hold our teeth inside our mouths  
careful not to push too hard on wisdom: oil, fire.

Sleepless nights. Aching stomachs.  
Skin too new to stretch.

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Haley Lasché is a yoga teacher and writing professor. Her poems have appeared such places as *Drawn to Marvel: Poems from the Comic Books*, *Hartskill Review* and *Dossier Journal*. Her first chapbook *Where It Leads* (2016) is available from Red Bird Chapbooks.



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