

Cast Off Thy Suffering

by Deborah Oster Pannell

What of the people who
carry the burden of
some imploded imbalance
their bloated bodies so burdened
by the overflow of hatred and disregard
against which they stanch themselves
with foody food, safety glue
pudding pie buttercups
golden rimmed pudding pops
and claim
their identity
roughly,
with the harshest of glances
furtive, heavy lidded
and not in that
suggestive, trance inducing
way but in a
self-conscious
hardened over
the soft-winged, wounded bird
that bore me
into her own
tattered
reflection/projection
way?

I don't know you.
Are you my forgotten past
or my future so distant
that I am loathe to hope
for any familiar detail?
I am padding me,

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self, insert location and
hope for the best.
You don't know me.
I am a trailblazer
(you look on)
smiling, you try to divine me.
You want to know what's in my
mind? No, maybe you just
want to penetrate my veneer.
You are arrogant. Should
I be angry or just float along
like the rest of the sailors?
Somewhere along tomorrow, I
will forget that I have the right
to do this. I will subvert my
joy and question my intentions.
I wish I were not so foolish.

Parts of my body
need concentrated attention now
I do not always remember
the relationship between
thought and form
and muscle and
sinewy connective
matter
strung tight
on willing frame
I must
stake a claim
or so I thought,
as I am proven
wrong once again
my narrative
falsely shaped

in alternate realities
looking ahead
of my gaze
I expect so much
my heart is heavy
with anticipation
the weight of sadness
subdivided
and scattered
and bearing down
on muscle
and fiber
and molecule
cellular distortion
permeates these walls
How many ways must
I tell this story?
Dare I replace
the terms of
the original contract?
I keep losing my way
but now I'm
told that is the new
standard of living,
so I guess it's all OK.

Mothers, fill your notebooks
make your children
swear an oath of allegiance
to share these books
with future generations
a choir of suffering there,
false happiness over here,
overbearing casualness there,
if more people read it

does it make it more important?
the external pressure to perform
has so many of us
falling by the wayside
we can't bear the heartache,
it fells us
great
sensitive beasts
so fragile, after all.
I won't tell you
how to think
or what to believe
if you promise you
will hold me gently
in some way
in your mind
your gaze
your arms
it doesn't matter!
the time, the distance,
they contract
a tesseract
and I am skipping and tripping
my way through
generations
patterned history
blockading my
memory
until, strand by strand
I pull out the
jeweled moments
and breathe them in for you

