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R.T. Castleberry

These Things Need to Be Said

Driven to marriage, from marriage
by ex-kids and office lovers,
friends disposition at dinner,
the marrying stone muddies,
accounts of accomodation expand.
Love is not big enough
to hold family debt,
crude computations
between guarantee and need.

Not engaging, you tease
with Marlboro lights,
icy Mannhattans.
Drinking to the hard luck of others,
your friends won't be mine.
Collectives of money changers,

late life law students,
lifestyle reductions leave them
uneasy at dinner party tables,
in-kind invitations.

Strenuously married, mine
set the tables, send the invitations.
Doctor/photographer, engineer/painter,
neighborhood-popular wives,
they're restaging the play where
everyone is wealthy and unkind.
Concealing discord with travel cloaks,
they take leisure evenings apart.
Turning from vows,
no maneuver mentioned is
useless in the social landscape.

Charms of a weekend date,
of Lancome and lingerie,
curdle into forgiving choice,
cycles in random revelation.
Waking after you
to wander the hallways,
I catch you at
the moonlight window.
Hand on your shoulder,
arm coiling your waist, I say,
"Talk to me."

Shedding Mistakes

Beside morning-silent streets,
distant gleam of vehicles in motion,
we meet, phones down,
at a café's outside table.
I see a flag flying at half-mast,
shaping the day's dialogue.
Eight insistent questions
are your conversation,
I won't answer three.
I measure moods by
the smiles of liars,
acid slice of a laugh.

I see you losing weight,
lacking language to examine
your lethargy, our demands.
We've stayed too long
with our first stories,
that lift of infatuation, fucking,
afternoon breakfast on Saturdays.
Ten years and children now
come between us.
Dismissing my solution,
you won't stop the search for
one rule to relieve regrets.
Trying for fun, you offer
a rose folded from a napkin.
Knowing your choices,
I order a third mimosa.
You're looking towards
a Tupelo homecoming.
I've found a way out.

Foraging Sleep

Like pilgrims carting
three seasons wreckage
to winter's pyre,
I sat awake 20 hours
shaking nightmares of
prison camp, cop show,
a catalog of slicing illness scars—
neck, chest and knee.
Medication side effects,
dreaming fury at a nurse's joke
rattled me to racing consciousness.
Cold and coiled on the couch,
I watch *The Rifleman*
on 4 a.m. cable,
hoping Lucas-boy will
slay me back to sleep.

R.T. Castleberry, a Pushcart nominee, has work in *Steam Ticket*, *Vita Brevis*, *As It Ought To Be*, *Travjectory*, *Silk Road*, *StepAway*, and elsewhere. He has also published work in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, New Zealand, Portugal, the Philippines, and Antarctica. His poetry has appeared in several anthologies, including

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