

Toka Raley

THE HAUNTING POEMS

May 10th, 2013

A Book of Poems

This is my third collection of poems and the most special of the three. These are poems about haunting and its power within different contexts and scenarios. As a reader I truly hope that you will be as haunted reading them as I was writing them.

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THE HAUNTING OF A COUNTRY ROAD

These wagon wheels were meant for gravel
 Carrying me, a suitcase and a life unraveled.
 Moving slowly at first as my needs kick in;
 Nights of "crack," weed and pills committing sin.

The fresh air slaps my cheeks as the horses wobble,
 And I wonder if I'll really give up the bottle.
 Clouds then sunlight as my parade marches on
 From nights I never thought I'd see the dawn.

Church bells ring as if to call me,
 But the priest betrayed me, left me bleeding.
 I needed comfort in the rectory's bed
 With the cross of Jesus hanging over my head.

Leavin' this town for somethin' better,
 Yet shadows and lines cross over each letter.
 To the ones I wrote who never wrote back,
 Goodbye, good riddis'... your candle is burned out.

The speed picks up on the outside of town,
 Leavin' gold dirt flyin', never reachin' the ground.
 No more spider's web to hold me still;
 Now a dream and summer to strengthen my will.

THE HAUNTING OF A COUNTRY ROAD cont'd

Oh country road, where will you take me?
Cuz I won't go back to the deep grey sea.
It's surface was pretty but so full of fear.
I could have drowned had I wanted in a toilet
of tears.

I will find love again, I know.
Gone away is the doubt and expectations so low.
Oh beautiful horse, let's go into the sunset
Across prairies, over hills, it's goodbye to the rest.

THE HAUNTING OF HOMETOWN BLUES

I can walk each sidewalk up and down
Steppin' over the cracks then karpin' round.
Downtown possip light's Debbie's fire.
Her boyfriend wavers... what's his true desire?

I live upstairs in a town center apartment
Privy to news and loves while paying my rent.
And when I go a street walkin',
People stop and stare as they're talkin'.

I don't ask for much when I go to the bar -
A drink and conversation make me twinkle like
a star.

The trees in the park rustle gently in the breeze,
But I swear it's only me who's so eager to please.

The funky used book store is my place to go
On the days when it rains and then when it snows.
The coffee there is good and I can sit and read.
I can stay there for hours with my intellect to feed.

THE HAUNTING OF HOMETOWN BLUES cont'd

Every row and then I get an invitation
 To dine on the square with the cat's reservation.
 Then a walk down the hill to the waterfront's love.
 It's my home with a prayer on the wings of a dove.

THE HAUNTING OF A CAT

She sits in the window all alone looking down.
 Her tail drapes the window sill, spreading its power to ground.
 She doesn't meow as she sits there, only partly closing her eyes.
 She has strength. She has magic. You won't see her cry.

Then she jumps to the floor and stretches her spine.
 She starts walking with a purpose as there's food to find.
 She'll lick her paws after eating, pitting proudly as she grooms.
 But the kitchen loses its power. It's no longer her favorite room.

A walk down the hall to her bed that awaits.
 There's a laziness, a languor, an easiness to her gait.
 She'll lounge in her bed slowly talking to sleep.
 Then when she awakens, her cat dreams she'll keep.

THE HAUNTING OF A THUNDERSTORM

From off in the distance, the faint sound of thunder
 From the leaves on the trees, the rustle of a breeze
 Clouds on the horizon growing darker by the minute
 The cows in the field lie down and tug their leads.

The sun goes away, a goodbye to the evening
 A glass of wine poured by a window facing west
 Bring in the dog and the laundry on the line.
 Get out those candles, shut the windows, keep open the blinds.

Clouds now begin to descend and swirl.
 Raindrops touch ground then brick steps so red.
 Wind blowing gusts thru my trees harassing birds.
 Lightning strikes ever so subtly, then boldly.

Come on down, you raindrops.
 Come on down, you thunder.
 Let the wind howl and drive the rain.
 Let the lightning strike, giving life to my pain.

THE HAUNTING OF AN ANGEL

Sometimes, an angel comes so quickly
During sleep that holds a dream.
If the dream is bold, the angel holds
A breath, a wing, a love untold.

A call for comfort in wings of gold
She sits on my headboard holding stories untold.
Stories of love, of hope, of happiness, of truth
Taking away shadows, darkness, lies and deceit.

Skin so white framed by cascading curls
A smile so serene it calms my world.
Best as both a spirit and a strong in extension
Touch me, dear angel, with memories too pretty to mention.

Never that you'll feel in the pitance of this night.
So stay with me, angel, please don't take flight.
I need you more than ever in times so bleak, so cold.
I've known you since childhood.
You'll watch over me when I'm old.

THE HAUNTING OF SPRING

Daffodils form a sea of yellow.
 Tulips open and close the day.
 Bluebirds chirp their songs so merry.
 Butterflies swoop then fly away.

Grass goes from brown to green.
 Strawberries ripen on the table to be eaten.
 Showers drench my villa's lawn.
 If only a rainbow went dusk to dawn.

Tequila shots in every bar in town
 Running through the meadows, lovers go from lost to found.

Baseball games gather folks to every park,
 And roses bloom, then close at dark.
 Some say the pollen bothers their outdoor lives,
 While others walk proudly through fields and forests
 alive.

Hail, spring! May your magical potions fill the
 air.

THE HAUNTING OF SUMMER

Watermelon shooters in every bar in town
 Hot music on the airwaves has re-decor' all around.
 Ridin' in my Chevy up and down the streets and parks,
 Lightning bugs hover my patio as daylight seeps away
 into dark.

Thunder rolls and lightning strikes on a hot July night.
 Dogs and cats hide away - too tired from the heat to put
 up a fight.

iced tea with lemon and lemonade on my front porch
 You're my favorite season, summer, so worth carrying
 the torch.

A swimming pool folds dreams and more,
 And corn fields line country roads pale.
 The green lushness of a garden invites promise,
 As a sailboat sails down a river of happiness.

Oh, summer, may you last forever - both in my
 heart and mind.

THE HAUNTING OF A MEMORY

I cannot stop the memory, the memory of you.
Movie on air 't workin', so what now should I do?
The grind of my job does so little to console.
Not even strong cocktails can cover up the hole.

A hole for hopes and dreams dashed for good.
I know I did my best; I did everything I could.
The highway doesn't seem the escape I was led to believe,
But a room in the house gives relief and some reprieve.

A lot of your pictures I've taken down and put away,
Yet I see you in the sky when I look across the bay.
If only you'd let go and set free my captive heart,
Instead of holding on when you know it's falling apart.

This house I'll have to sell -
It's too clouded now with dust.
Traces of love once embraced
Half my life, I wonder, did I squander it to waste?

THE HAUNTING OF A CRY FOR HELP

It started with a sound, a noise I could barely hear.
Yet as I traced it, I knew I'd find a tear.
A tear for the sadness, for the aid so desperately needed.
A tear for the heart now ripped open, leavin' a bleedin'.

If you don't wanna touch me, then fine, just move away.
What we wanted at that time kept every pracker man at bay.

Drivin' down a flat road in a hell riddin' town,
You'd think someone would have cared enough to turn that
truck around.

But the wheels just kept on turnin', leaving more tears and
pain
Soaked in the shadows of clouds with poundin' rain.

A moment of attention could of saved this cryin' heart.
A hug, a cup of coffee, a meal to mend the bark.
The robes and the shakin' consumed a soul and the
spirit of a pen breathin'.

THE HAUNTING OF SAM

Sam was blonde and fair with a tongue on fire -
 Walkin' tall, walkin' strong in a town full of desire.
 Shakin' hands, blowin' kisses to the trash on the street,
 Light my cigarette in a bar where the beautiful people
 meet.

A Lucky Strike, a Marlboro red will do,
 Cuz Sam's at the bar sizing up drinks for two.
 Of charm next to like ice in the bottom of a glass,
 Then a glance, a gaze will make the time pass.

Whether it's daylight or midnight Sam gets this town to howl,
 As the dogs come a runnin',
 Don't let go, Sam, we need it now.

If the beauty of a vampire compares to yours,
 It promises seduction in a room full of mirrors.
 "To see one's self is to be one's self," Sam will truly proclaim.
 Just don't go away, for they're souls for you to tame.

Sam, you can turn a crystal and stroke porcelain skin,
 And your house has a parlor that was christened with pin.
 At home I could live in and surrender to in time,
 Making the journey across miles to the mansion so sublime.

THE HAUNTING OF A MOMENT LOST

It comes so quickly, then goes like the wind.
 Why can't it linger longer and heal this awful shape
 I'm in?

I tried all the Pixins' supposed to make me heal -
 Not moments at all as I look at bottles of pills.

I run from here to there searching for acceptance
 in a crowd.

It never comes; I turn away from the voices so loud.
 If I could only find a place to turn the volume down low,
 things would slow, maybe halt and I'd have
 something to show.

My cat in the window looks for something to hold.
 Don't cross the ribbon on the road or you'll grow beyond
 old.

Picking up the pieces one piece at a time
 Takes me back to those moments when I didn't have to
 try.

I couldn't go much further without stepping back
 to see

The cracks in the mirror from a road nap so real.

THE HAUNTING OF A MOMENT LOST cont'd

From the flats to the prairies and the desert
on its toes,
I'll stop and stare at the blue sky
And wait and watch for clouds to come and go.

THE HAUNTING OF A CLOUD

As my time grows dark, I wait for you to appear.
As you shed raindrops, so do my eyes shed tears.
I go to the window and call for you to come.
I just hope when I get out, I'll be able to run.

I'll run across the field looking up at the sky.
I'll pound the ground, kick the dirt and feel the
dust in my eyes.
I don't want the dust to block my view of you.
As you lower over my homestead, I'll smile at
grey and blue.

I'll never want to see a cloudless sky again.
I sorta like it messy now in a thunder rollin'
pen.
So, don't let the wind blow you too far away.
You can leave the night time sky. Just don't leave the day.

THE HAUNTING OF A PINK BEDROOM

It has its allure, the trappings of pink,
And smoke breeds fire on a bed where pills make
me think.

Think of laughter, of good times, of dreams
Laid

Lying on a silk pink bedspread, how could
anything go bad?

I don't require force in this room so bright.
I need comfort and love to surround me each night.
Pills force thought made me into Superman
Only led to bloating and vomit in a bedside pan.

I would stare at the ceiling and see pink angels
swirl high

On that crystal chandelier that seemed real to
these eyes.

The beauty above me could soothe not threaten
As my head rests on a pink pillow floating me
upwards to heaven.

John Raley

THE HAUNTING OF A PINK BEDROOM cont'd

Lock the door to this room; I don't need another
town.

My needs will take hold in this space I'll soon
own.

So, come visit me here, see the windows curtain
laced,

And ruin' out of time, this bottle, with the
demons force faced.

THE HAUNTING OF NEW YORK

Streets packed and fueled with an abundance of life,
A world far away from small town strife.
It's much better here where faces blend,
And I'm not in the paper dodging threats by other men.

I'd rather be held captive in a place like this
where no one cares if two men share a kiss.
They're other things moving from uptown to down.
There's twenty dollar cocktails, so you'll buy the extra round.

Central Park flushes green from the top of a skyscraper,
And unions prosper without the benefit of paper.
I can walk when I'm restless.

I can smile at the crowd.

I can feel my dreams pulse at... so quiet in the country,
now in the city they're loud.

Hotels and their lounges invite surprises with dances,
Then on a rooftop looking south, the incredibility romance.
On the Eastside then the Westside there's deals to deal,
And rainbows of money raise the bar for what's real.

THE HAUNTING OF NEW YORK cont'd

When I left this city, I left so much behind
that I hope to recapture and hold onto next time.

It will be my home again, I know.

No more ladders and ladders, just a brownstone on
E 73rd and a better to show.

THE HAUNTING OF A DREAM

When sleep comes sweetly, it melts the ice,
 Of a day to be forgotten in a world of black and white.
 After the food and the drinks and all the goodbyes,
 To be down at last under the roof above and a starlit sky.

Warm summer nights bring the best in my dreams
 As the cold in the winter lets me shiver from losses extreme.
 I dream in colors so vivid it's almost too strong,
 And such intensity as I go deeper can only last so long.

I couldn't stay afloat without going into sleep.
 I'd try against the window, there'd be no memory to keep.
 So I long for midnight slumber to use the train wreck of the day.
 Then I'll wake to morning dew and put those dolls away.

No rattle, shake or screeching as I slow this baby down.
 There's only peace and quiet once the thunder calms down.
 White dust sprinkled on my lips so soft.
 I'll slow down my breath for the comfort of a noid turned
 off.

THE HAUNTING OF THE PAST

"Move ahead. Don't lose steam," I'm told.
But the greyness of this day highlights my life growing old.
A train won't take me any faster away,
So I'll look out the window and savor this day.

For the day before was blue and warmer to touch,
And the day before that a white hollow, yet I miss it so much.
After awhile it all blues in the candle light.
It weakens, then strengthens, as it holds up the twilight.

You can always say that you need to leave it behind,
But where is the strength and power you have to find?
Can one truly forgive if one can't forget the past?
Can one forget the past if its blood still oozes and lasts?

A heart broken over and over leaves a river of regret.
Will you still take the risk and avoid a safety net?
Blowing against the wind will only cost you time,
So just take apart the memory and let it bleed into
the line.

THE HAUNTING OF BETRAYAL

It stings of madness, sharp and slicing the bone
It rips through the skin to all the layers below.
It cuts ruthlessly into layers of pain.
It runs an uneven path through torrents of rain.

Slammed all over, up and down my spinal nerves,
I can barely hold on.

It races wild through pulses of people.
A wall of steel I thought was armor for my heart,
But it cracked and rattled, falling helplessly apart.

Doors slammed shut to ever getting back
The love I thought was special, now falling helplessly off track.
I wouldn't want it back if it cost me more than this,
Despite the wrath and power of your intoxicating lies.

One day I'll stop my crying.
I'll go back to breathing the way I should.
But I'll never find my rhythm. It's gone and gone for good.
My movement will be slower, less sure than before.
Since the day I welcomed heartache, it came a pounding
at my door.

THE HAUNTING OF A BLACKBIRD

"Blackbird, blackbird, you walk across my lawn,
In search of something good to devour, I'm sure.

"You look so sleek, so shiny in the mid-day sun.
I'll just stare out the window as you have your fun."

"Don't forget the birdbath, it's water so inviting.

It's waiting for you in the garden, so don't dare forget."

Two more blackbirds descend upon the grass

"But you don't get excited; you've already claimed your path."

My sweet friend joins me at the window to stare.

He also looks on in wonder, as if your soul is bare.

So we both marvel together and wish upon your wings

For peace behind these walls and for the simplest of things.

"When you fly away, dear blackbird,
I hope you won't be gone too long.

You talk so beautifully in rhyme

That flowers bend and open, what's mine is yours
in time."

THE END