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City Bench

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city bench
daniel walter

Breathe in the night air
As if it were filled with
The nicotine you need to
Keep your hands from shaking.
A band of crickets plays
Jazz on the street corner for
Change, though they know
You have no change to give.
You sync your eyes with
The blinking streetlamps,
Off/on, off/on, as to become
One with the city night.
Relish in the silence of the
empty sky, with no stars to
wish upon, you throw a handful
of dandelion seeds to the moon.
Contemplate the strangers on
The sidewalk, read their stories
Printed on the sway of their hips,
The beat of their step, the tune of their smile.
Give meaning to the rolling trash
Being swept into the storm drain,
Recycle it into a metaphor for
Whatever demon you see fit.
Once you’ve had your fill of
Time and remembrance, take
Leave of this place, leave an
Imprint on this city bench,
Take a piece of the night
In your bag, next to the
Car keys and pepper spray.

war zone
tabitha young

Hands gripped the counter, eyes
struck with the image of water.
Water was safe, water was continuous
zeros.
Sleeves ran down forearms, and
covered bruised thighs and calves.
They wrung my body out like a towel, every last drop had to leave.

Lips trembled, from what left me
unsure.
A lack of protein, or the fear of the
mirror in front of me?
Hands gripped a water bottle, eyes kept to the floor.
There was work that had to be done, 150 calories - burn 300… 250 calories - burn 400.

Faces occupied the room, eyebrows
lined with sweat.
Music blared and metal clanking
echoed through the small space.
It was a room of hyenas, their laughs
masked by heavy breathing.
They watched my bones crack, my
arms bruise, my heart quicken.
Their eyes reflected the way I felt
about myself.

Footsteps kept me going, warm air
brutal enough to freeze.
Daggers were in my kneecaps, but I
continued to run.
Hands gripped the plastic side, eyes
closing.
The butchered sounds of my
breathing covered up by the beats in
my ears.

Feet stumbled over nothing, only
down by 300, still not enough.
My brain didn’t want to stop, but my
body did.
Rinse and repeat. Rinse and repeat.
The same shaky legs carried me to the
battlefield.

It was a war zone with a fork and
knife.
Small plates, or no plate at all.
Faces of concern, faces of anger,
forks in front of my mouth like
muskets aimed to fire.
5, 6, 7 grapes… 80, 82, 84 calories to
burn.

The tub of the shower filled up with
the passing time,
warm water cutting into my sore
ankles.
Water hit my bruised skin, like air
attacking a fallen apple.
The lack of protein consumed hurt my
body, but put my mind at ease.

My worn out sweater blocked my
stomach from the sight
reflected in the two most painful
shards of glass in my room.
They cut deeper than anything, when
my eyes finally fell on them.