

JON PAUL FIORENTINO / from **Mentholism**

...The Closer I Come to Elegy

Little Lucifer falls
despite listless prayers

The palliative strain
and cigarette drama

Don't fuck this up
with your feelings

Went to sleep without
him

Tried to dream him
back

But it's zero sum the
summer

Nothing cold about it
just that

the closer I come to loving
the closer I come to elegy

Shh. There are other
poets trying to die

Sherbrooke, November 3, 2006

Jobless Wonderboy

Jobless little wonder
needs his antibiotics

Jobber never leaves
never earns his lesions

Got paper and markers
and motherfucking white-out

Listen, sent you a text
message in 1983

One day you'll get it

All Frigid

This cold is your gift so
spend countless hours grifting

We have sole proprietorship
of these barricades

Close your eyes
and pretend that we have talent

Impossible not to be swayed
you're too into you, too craven

You can't hold your liquor
but you really can't hold your sobriety

I think you smoke Craven Menthols
I'm not sure why you smoke them or why I'm craven

Get all frigid. Ride late night
to last call. Scratch open the white scabs

The walk-in therapist will
see you now. There you are

You don't have a problem
would you like that in writing?

I need an adjacent room
from which to watch you

So hard to keep your story straight
this poem makes sure of it

Comprose

composed in 1946
compost in 4/4 time

then
comprosed
wicked and defiant

missing you

send in the nouns

What's the Worst That Could Happen, Courtney?

She slides out of a launderette
No, wait. She struts out of a café

Check that. She stumbles out of a bus
Or not. She steps out of a bank

Too dull. She stirs out of a dream
That sucks. She slips out of a clinic

The washer is old; the smoke is thick
The transit is slow; the credit is wrecked
The fear is real; the doctor is sick

Her clothes are stained; her coffee is cold
Her transfer is gone; her money is low
Her mind is made up; her pills do not work

Grift Economy

Manage to in syntax
Xerox massage it

Bedsore soothe, bedsitters swoon
Back when X cared about things

Intentions pulped or stapled
closer

So close to sleep
yet so closed

The epiphany changes
when the font does

Easy to look down on you
from this basement suite

Stop Knowing How I Am

When the punch line is chlorine
you transgraze, catch cold

When the punch line is Advair
the side effect is death

When the punch line is adjunct
high on grad school Sudafed

When the punch line is prairie
periodicals spiral

When the punch line is hockey
tell it antiseptic

Stifled by Winnipeg dust
stunted by Winnipeg stricture
when the punch line is stop

I'm Pulling For Your Narrative

It's a trope
I think you know it

The ATM looks lovely tonight
if you believe in the word lovely

You kill an adjective
and then

The word lovely wakes
you up at 4pm and says

You sleep too much
you drink too long

Hysterical Narrative

Alpha.
Wide.
Right.

Shouldn't think so
I've been so thoughtless

Pronounce hegemony wrong
that's nothing

Announce too candidly
my candidacy

Something I hardly know
protects itself from being happy

So much more than something
whatever that means

Years saunter by, increasingly incapable of lyric
yet here I am

All about your breath, all about you breathing
every beta male needs better Maud Gonne

Twisted thorns and all
you are there / where is you?

Very well aware: closed/posed/structuralist readings
find me lacking or treading or tactless or fruitless

But here's something: it's 4:07 am
you are asleep; and I weep swell

Beta.

Left.

Home.

Cautiously Solipsistic

If self is dishappy
cautionary tale stuck on repeat

If posed self is paused
solitary drive drivel

If drive is inward
sociological, heteronormative slapstick

If feel you can drive it home
power outage, gender outrage

If triage is trendy
crack and hiss Christmas illness

Don't let yourself get paid
if cost is that everyone knows you gets paid