

Under the Edge of February

By Jayne Cortez

Under the edge of february
in hawk of a throat
hidden by ravines of sweet oil
by temples of switchblades
beautiful in its sound of fertility
beautiful in its turban of funeral crepe
beautiful in its camouflage of grief
in its solitude of bruises
in its arson of alert

Who will enter its beautiful calligraphy of blood

Its beautiful mask of fish net
mask of hubcaps mask of ice picks mask
of watermelon rinds mask of umbilical cords
changing into a mask of rubber bands
Who will enter this beautiful beautiful mask of
punctured bladders moving with a mask of chapsticks

Compound of Hearts Compound of Hearts

Where is the lucky number for this shy love
this top-heavy beauty bathed with charcoal water
self-conscious against a mosaic of broken bottles
broken locks broken pipes broken
bloods of broken spirits broken through like
broken promises

Landlords Junkies Thieves
enthroning themselves in you
they burn up couches they burn down houses
and infuse themselves against memory
every thought
a pavement of old belts
every performance
a ceremonial pickup
how many more orphans how many more neglected shrines
how many stolen feet stolen fingers
stolen watchbands of death
in you how many times

Harlem

hidden by ravines of sweet oil
by temples of switchblades
beautiful in your sound of fertility
beautiful in your turban of funeral crepe
beautiful in your camouflage of grief
in your solitude of bruises
in your arson of alert
beautiful

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Source: *On the Imperial Highway* (Hanging Loose Press, 2009)