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