

POETRY

# Three Modes of Death & Serenity

by Oana Nicola



"Moment of Clarity" by Saam (Ahmed Osama)

1.

Each waking, a gamble  
with my patience      “You used  
to be so smart.” Now the brick wall’s  
done the cleanup job, not growing up  
but hollowing out.

A worm’s eye view of myself spitting  
the ins and outs of books I haven’t read  
to wrangle degrees from long wilted  
love affairs!

They sit, catching dust.

A prayer of gratitude  
for the 925 job — keeps me buying  
bikinis for feeling like God. Meetings  
where we ask ourselves what good  
do you think is worth dying for??  
Meetings for the prettiest business card.  
Meetings for making it right in the world  
conducted through kaleidoscopic monocles.

2.

Self-medication, a privilege    swaying  
in ravenous moonlight, the names of all hopes  
and panting miseries escape me. Know  
we cannot control the knife we work for  
or the one our friends fall between / only our bodies /

and even then,  
dubitably...

So I trip on tabs and learn secrets  
from all the other bottle delinquents.  
We say the same serenity prayer  
in the park and outside the bar.

Grant me collars that flow freer,  
a coffin I've carved out for myself.

The promise:

Roller skating through the race war  
modern men with modern affinities  
an infinite capacity for giving up.

3.

I used to have dreams, vivid ones too  
of fucking my favorite fictional character  
or writing scathing reviews of every president's  
met gala suit. But now, I dream of simple things  
like stumbling into some life's deeper meaning  
or eating breakfast that doesn't taste like evading  
the question.

I can't find a pill to placate the restlessness.

I can't find a cause to put on my resume.

I can't find a corner worth backing into.

So I wait for vacations and birthdays, move through  
spring and autumn watching whatever season  
reruns, shout whichever names move well  
through my mouth momentarily.

Some nights I still search for someone  
to hold my chin up and stroke  
the burning out from my cheeks.

But all I seem  
to feel anymore  
are my own

trembling hands.