

Joan Mazza

Heartworm*

Call it obsession or intrusive thoughts—
conversations I replay to amend the endings,
have the final say I never had with words
I didn't know. Let me say *boundaries* and no.
Let me say, *You're out of line, unethical.*
What you ask of me is illegal. You don't hear
me saying no? I'll say it again. NO!

I've tried the cures: have written essays, stories,
journal entries, a twenty thousand word rant
I never mailed, but mailed a note to ask him
to return my house key and returned his, cc'd
the Department of Professional Regulation.
I wrote a hundred poems (here's another),
and a memoir titled *Arguing with the Dead*.

That shrink, that narcissistic cult leader, is dead
six years. He's buried, his patients set free
from his bad advice to marry and divorce,
free of harmful meds, demands for services
without payment. Do those other regulars
I saw for years still talk and quarrel with him
while driving? Does he show up in their dreams?

In my peaceful, calm, and careful life of bread
and almonds, minestrone soup, I make cards
with folded origami papers. through days of reading,
embers of that old rage smolder, ignite fires,
leave me alert to danger, vigilant to every slight
and blunder. A woman therapist trained in trauma
says she can help. Will I let her in?

*Heartworm. *n.* a relationship or friendship that you can't get out of your head, which you thought had faded long ago but is still somehow alive and unfinished, like an abandoned campsite whose smoldering embers still have the power to start a forest fire. (from *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*)

Lachesism*

Who are those people who feel relieved
when their homes are leveled by a hurricane,
unburdened, lighter by the total loss of cars,
clothing, beds, plates, photos, art?

Alien species, they prefer to wander into
unknowns with one small bag, squatters couch surfing,
looking forward, never back, happy to shed
hobbies and tools, their fabric stash and wood,

books stacked on coffee tables or next to beds.
They're thrilled to lose tax returns, computers,
childhood report cards. They love to say,
Burn it down. Blow it up. Call the wrecking ball.

They long for the shake up, the break up,
slow down to gawk at accidents, watch disaster
porn on YouTube. They're the ones taking
selfies on the shaky bridge as floodwaters crest.

Who are they? Pyromaniacs and pipe bombers,
pioneers designing more powerful explosives,
researching the punch of an electromagnetic
pulse, praying for the perfect apocalypse,

all screens dark, no radio. They imagine they'll
be among the few survivors, thrilled at a new
start, challenged by raw beginnings. Awed by ruins,
they revel in their footfalls—echoing and loud.
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*Lachesism. *n.* the desire to be struck by disaster—to survive a plane crash, to lose everything in a fire, to plunge over a waterfall—which would put a kink in the smooth arc of your life, and forge it into something hardened and flexible and sharp, not just a stiff prefabricated beam that barely covers the gap between one end of your life and the other.

(from *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*)

Joan Mazza worked as a microbiologist and psychotherapist, and taught workshops on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six psychology books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self* (Penguin/Putnam). Her poetry has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Adanna Literary Journal*, *Poet Lore* and *The Nation*. She lives in rural central Virginia. www.JoanMazza.com