

Holly Coleman

Saint Clement

Every spring I coax a bruise awake
in the soft crease where my thigh begins.

I name it Saint Clement.
Patron of vaulted confessions,
keeper of the ache I bring
to its knees but never martyred.

I feed it shower steam and worn denim,
a grin split wide as a hymn.
Inside my ribs: thunder, thunder, thunder.
A hush pretending at storm.

Proof.
I nail it down.
I nail it down.
I nail it down.
Call this wound my anchor.
Call it my private allegiance.

It tastes like battery tongue, a holy spark.
I lick my finger, press too deep,
taste salt and static and me.
Alive, still breakable.

Once I dreamt it grew lashes,
wore a halo of wasps, called me mother.
It winked a promise: *keep me inside*
and they'll never know.

Some mornings I kneel tile-cold,
heel grinding velvet raw,

whisper my plea into inky flesh.
We are soft.
We are soft.
We are soft.
Until my armor remembers itself.

Hardness, a mask.
Tenderness, law.
Scripture learned by touch alone.

Summer steals it.
I drift aisles, bruise-hunt peaches,
thumb them open at my hip,
wet as confession.
Stack them back
like we never spoke.

One day I'll peel back my skin,
show myself what mercy costs,
press my mouth to my living relic,
taste how soft I've stayed.
I owe you nothing.

(amen amen amen)