

apter  
 CollinsPublishers  
 e Street  
 9GF  
 s.co.uk  
 blishers  
 or Street Upper,  
 9W8

on 2023  
 in ebook format  
 ers 2023  
 hofy 2023  
 ight  
 vork

from the  
 l-2  
 es, characters and incidents  
 nation. Any resemblance  
 es is entirely coincidental.

be reproduced, stored in  
 y any means, electronic  
 rise, without the prior  
 s.

Always with love. Always.

# *A Pause between Seconds*

Chapbook:  
 Lana T. Elsehemi  
 Department of Arts and Sciences, University of Pittsburgh  
 Introduction to Poetry Writing  
 Professor Sten Carolson

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Page 3: Traffic *Jam*

Page 4: Original Collage

Page 5: translating Silence and Original Collage

Page 6: the other Sides

Page 7: Time with a Pulse and Original Drawing

Page 8: Tick Tick Tick and Original Collage

Page 9: For the hell of it and Original Drawing

Page 10: Rip a hOle in me

Page 11: Self Portrait of my Shadow and Original Drawing

Page 12: Imitation and Original Collage

Page 13: a soul left Unbroken and Original Collage

Page 14: Three Line Stories

Page 15: Quadrant Poems

Page 16: Haikus

Page 17: Mad Libs for the Mind

Page 18: My answers

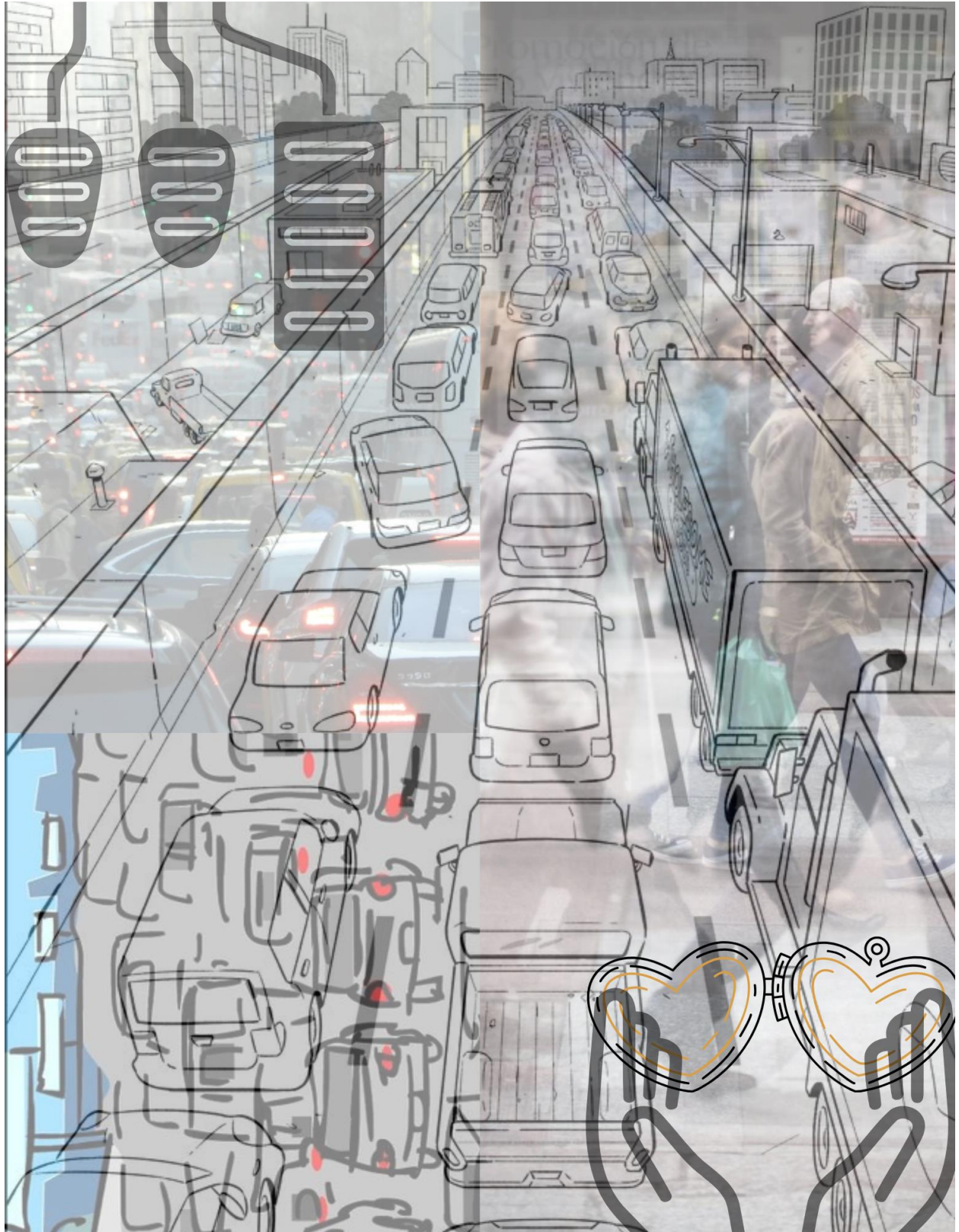
**Traffic Jam**

my brakes screamed as my heel grazed against its ridges,  
the beams claiming to be working but not a thing seen past my nose.  
are they even working? I ask, squinting and wondering.

I gasp to the hands of fate strangling my neck,  
pinky twirling around my mother's locket,  
resting on my collar bone.

The locks on my door communicating through chimes,  
acting as armed forces, threatening my words from seeping out of the  
cracks  
. it moved

I step out and wander through the traffic of my mind,  
peeping through the windows, watching myself make that face,  
every time,  
in different moments of my life,  
every instant stuck at this light,  
never getting my car to turn the way it should.





**the other Side**

Each day, I feel the scourging of a hole being made,  
meeting my words through  
a wall with a voice in it.

Every morning at ten, my ritual—  
staring at a bowl of cereal—is broken.

Light scraping on the other side interrupts,  
my mother calls me a fool,  
says it's only the wind.

But there's too much soul behind that sound,  
too much for a whistle of nature.

On the pavement, bones exposed,  
words with weak syllables  
overtake the solid cement,  
etching what's left of me.

Every night at ten, my phone rings.

My lungs shrink as my father's voice pours  
from the box brimming echoes, spilling static and poor syllables.

Each day, convinced that all who knows me,  
is the scraping on the other side,  
hearing me most in my silence.

### Time with a Pulse



Silent for a mere hour, I watch from a shelf where dust clings to my casing. My ticking, steady yet futile, is the one thing I cannot betray. Time is my master, my

sustenance, my tormentor—one I cannot escape. I envy those who's faces glance at me in fear, as though I hold the power to steal their moments. Do they hear the ticking? Is it just me? A relentless rhythm that neither rest nor neglect can halt. I panic in the corner marking an end I cannot predict. My arm raises every hour like a warning, signaling to the empty room that the day is nearing its close. The tick is uncontrollable—a pulse of its own, mechanical and unfeeling. Still, I wonder: does the quiet they seem to enjoy mean freedom, or are they too bound by a rhythm they cannot name?

Enough people come in that they call themselves “regulars”, those I’ve come to know so well without ever seeing their faces. I get to listen, declarations of love and angry whispers; their words collecting dust. I listen to the whispers of the shop workers, their plans, their betrayals. I envy their tongues, though they use them poorly. If only I had something to show them what I’ve thought, what I’ve heard, what I’ve kept hidden in my gears.

I try and speak, words replaced with a clang. Once again, I am the reason they scramble, rush, and panic. Do their lives revolve around my hands as cruelly as mine does? But I only mark what they give me—seconds, hours, lives. They leave, and the room grows darker, their voices fade, but my pulse remains. For as long as they live, so must I.

Now, left with the ghost of my comrades who hung before me. Their shattered faces and rusted gears whisper warnings I cannot decipher, reminders that my own end is inevitable. But so be it. I do not live, yet I mark life. I do not feel, yet I count every heartbeat, every sigh, every tear. What is it to mark what one cannot know? Is this why they ignore me—because I cannot truly understand them?

## Tick, Tick, Tick

Tick Tick Tick, the blues and reds move across the room,  
 Moving so fast I barely catch them in motion,  
 Maybe my eyes deceived, and it was purple all along,  
 And my mind was so desperate to separate them,  
 To notice the blue and be rid of red, useless efforts.  
 The dice was rolled, the board crooked,  
 The bulbs blinking and my lashes with them,  
 The ticks grew louder, the colors now one,  
 My arms shoots up and out I cry THE BUTLER DID IT,  
 But the knife was nowhere to be found, not in my hand nor his,  
 The dice was rolled once again, double sixes,  
 And all that was on the board was purple,  
 No red, no blue, no winner left to gloat,  
 The ticking silent the bulbs now out, and the dice lost.



### For the hell of it

For the hell of it, Mrs. Great, you should have stayed. On the sun-drenched porch you spent your summers on, rocking back and forth as a threat to the neighborhood kids to keep it down once the lights dimmed. We could feel you watch our shadows stretch across the street, waiting for one of us to fall off a bike that was carrying six, and silencing the tears with one of your warm pools of sugar and chocolate chips.

What was the rush, Mrs. Great, to leave us with the clocks ticking louder. Each second a reminder of your choices to leave, couldn't you have just stayed, if only for a cup of tea, a moment of hearing to breathe in quiet, to savor the mundane. To bask in the beauty of you just being.

The last time I shook your hand, I feel life pulse beneath your fingertips, as if a reminder that you were still there. We had come over for brunch, my parents and I, and in a warning the light refused to enter the corners of your house. You asked me to stay behind and help you clean up; my parents gave me a look meaning I should've. But I whined about how Jack and the others were already waiting at the hill, you smiled and told me to run. To enjoy my youth, my life.

The last time I saw you, the dust had yet to settle. The neighborhood gathered in your memory, and your house was defined by the empty corners. Couldn't you have just stayed to stop the crying, the soulless stares, or even the fake griever. Shielding us from the philosophical thoughts of what life really is. Stopping the inevitable passage of time, forgetting.

For the hell of it, couldn't you have just stayed?



## Rip a hOle in me

Shapes floating out there becoming magenta cookies rotting  
blue figures deforming.

the total

The feelings crowding the sky, making no room for the  
clouds,

the thoughts,

Is it worth the mess, the blood, mess,

My sponge is rotting, the cleaning, erasing, forgetting,

It scars my hand the more I use it, I let the ink stain every  
last bit of me,

*cut a hole in the poem to play peekaboo with the afterlife,*

Wave hello and look away as fast as you can,

See through the words,

See through the mess,

See through me.

### Self Portrait of my Shadow

to share your paint with a cheek,  
 you're grey and velvet,  
 standing, smiling, or so I'd assume,  
 shaped by how you want to be seen  
 solar eyes reflecting a piece  
 of me,  
 an arm reaching for lying wrinkles,  
 pool of monograms  
 cut

that's where the teeth lie

that's where my voice—

flinging back, whiplash  
 tender wind that hugs like my father would,  
 loss of years made it harder to pick me up like that,  
 raw, though the eyes whisper more than the jaw,  
 sure its sore,  
 lack of substance and flesh,  
 eyelashes,  
 how you love,  
 on the street,  
 I paint with no brush, no paints, no canvas,

I paint you,  
 guessing  
 how you want to be seen,  
 do you like  
 me                   portraying you?  
 would even I know me  
 from the back of *my* head?



**Imitation**

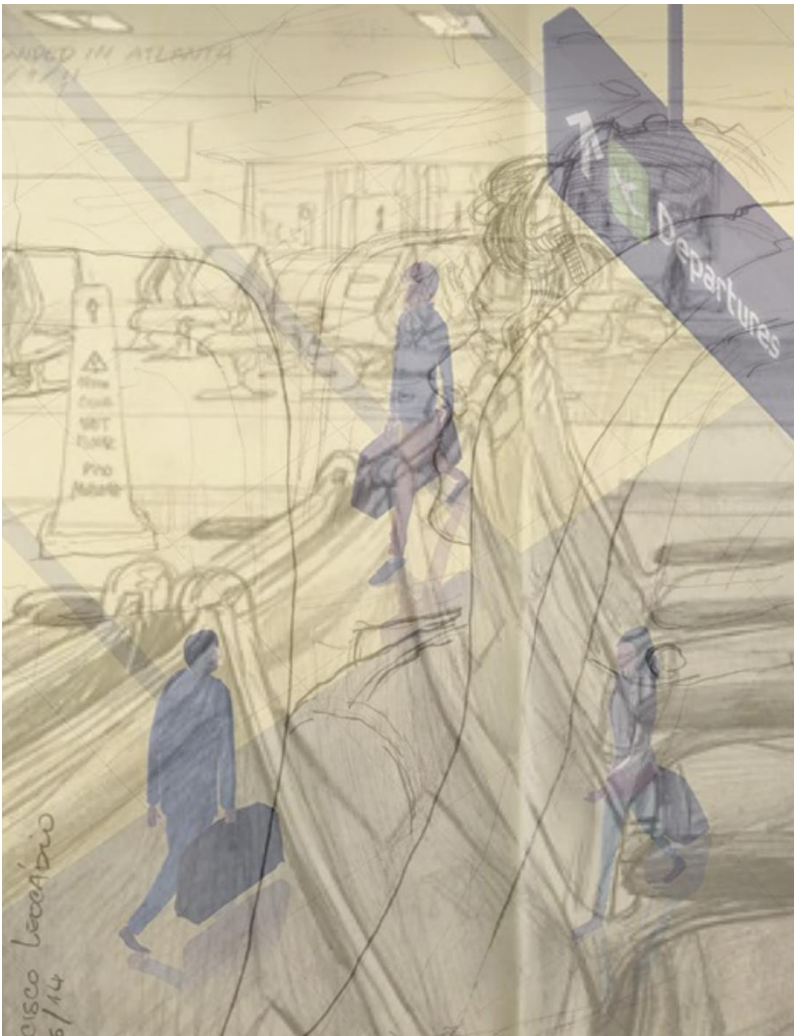
I've never not wondered  
Even when I resolved  
                  we were threads meant to fray apart.  
What's this weight on  
My chest—  
A signal,  
                  perhaps, from a version of me  
  
I've yet to become.  
  
Today's quiet  
                  And the laughter it cloaks  
Are a sharper mirror than I care to see.  
I'm tired of leaning  
                  into the space between us,  
Deciphering the absence of words.  
Here I am—mute,  
in a chorus of echoes.



I only wanted to be remembered as warmth,  
Not this brittle remnant  
of intentions unmet.

**a soul left Unbrken**

to be the feeling of receiving flowers,  
 dancing freely in public,  
 that last kiss at the airport,  
 a single tear,  
 a drop of salt swallowed by the wind.



To be Remembered,  
 Watching words bleed into the air,  
 an unfiltered fountain,  
 spilling time like sand  
 through the cracks of their eyes.

Lost but not Forgotten,  
 when I grow up I want to be love,  
 when my soul escapes its bleeding cage,  
 when it can no longer feel,  
 when I can no longer love,

I want you to cower at my name,  
 regret your inability to come to the door,  
 too lazy to even honk or wait,  
 and feel ashamed for your indifference,  
 for I want to be remembered as love,  
 not your Mistakes.

### THREE LINE STORIES

She jiggled the handle again, confused she said.

“But I never locked it.” She dropped her purse as the door opened on its own.

Her reflection holding the key on the other side.

The violin hummed its last, the string snapping mid bow.

He sighed and tossed it away, knocking down the instruments in his way.

He looked at his conductor and nodded, exiting stage left never to return.

The man should've remembered to tell his wife he was going to the park.

That he was going to see the birds on his secret bench.

Maybe then they would've found him sooner.

The woman blew out the candles on her seventy second birthday.

As the breath left her body, she was seventy one again, for a mere second.

Then, she was seven, a small girl playing with blocks before her end.

The moons hum softly,  
whispering their secrets to the tides that look at them,  
awaiting their commands on how to move.

The sun had  
received  
the moon's sighs  
"your fire blinds even  
my  
shadows,  
can you not rest,  
just once,  
and let me reign in quiet?"

Each breath hidden behind the clouds the sun had sent as  
spies. Dissolving  
unspoken, but somehow understood.

Those below pointing at their secrets,  
claiming them as their own.

Nothing belonged to the moons,  
not even themselves, forgotten  
by daytime, ignored by the  
snores of others.

The wind carries their  
enigmas across the  
hemispheres,  
the pressure of this  
listening causes the wind  
to fall of the ever so  
reliable pressure gradient  
force.

The sun ignored such feeble  
cries,  
its flames deaf to the whispers,  
painting the sies in colors too bold  
for the moon's pale words to stain.

Threads of stories stitches  
through the air it travels  
through,  
whistling a rhythm no one  
remembers.

"What are complaints to a star?"  
the moons turned to each other  
frowned, and spoke,  
"You hold the night then,  
carry the dreams of those who fear you."

A river watches  
as the skies are at war,  
as its surface trembles  
under their watchful gaze.

But the sun turned away,  
casting its light  
even where the moon wished  
darkness.

Time drips off the edges,  
each moment stretching,  
desperate to fall into endless stillness,  
but the current pulls it forward,  
relentless, unyielding.

The sky now holding the  
weight of stars,  
secrets, and the wind's  
safe passage through.  
Like Hermes, speeding  
through the skies,  
Delivering the complaints  
to the all so mighty sun.

The universe watched the  
silent war,  
Hoping the moon  
would  
return  
if it could  
accept all  
that was  
done.

The river prays in soft murmurs,  
hoping the sun would forget its existence,  
to spare it the searing touch of light,  
to cease its daily assault on the water,  
where reflections shatter into jagged shards of brilliance.

No change to be made.

Night creeps in, offering a fragile truce,  
its darkness a veil for the river to breathe.  
Yet, the moons, too, keeps watch.

And so, the river flows,  
a silent witness to celestial strife,  
its surface bearing the scars of the sky's eternal war.

## HAIKUS

The box under my  
bed haunts my thoughts and I just  
left my dreams to die.

You should have waited  
clung on for me, for a mo—  
meant it, could you have?

Will you be gone in  
morning, the sun captures you  
vaporizing there.

Words unnatural,  
slimy and hurtful to the  
ear, the head, the heart.

With a simple sway,  
it would fall, shatter, cut one's  
foot, and it was okay.

The numbers flip and  
I smile as I bask in my  
own genius, at five

In a perfect home,  
world, place, people, you would smile  
and stand by me here.

MAD LIBS FOR THE MIND**To have two (body parts)**

Would bestow (emotion) upon (abstract noun),  
 A refuge for those who (verb) their (plural noun)  
 in the (adjective) (plural noun) of forgotten (plural noun).  
 But you (verb, past tense)—  
 a (body part) to (verb) alone,  
 its rhythm echoing (emotion) into (adjective) (noun).

**To have (number) (plural noun)**

Is to share the weight of (abstract noun)  
 (abstract noun) and (abstract noun) balanced,  
 the (noun) lightened,  
 like (plural noun) retreating from a (adjective) (noun).

If I could be (adjective),  
 That I would leave this (adjective) (place),  
 With no (noun) of me left adrift,  
 I would (verb), unwilling to (verb) from a (noun) that bound me  
 to my (adjective) (noun).  
 But still, I am (adjective)—  
 my (body part)'s twin (verb, present tense) the (place), their (noun) searching,  
 their (body part) rising in (emotion), to (verb) what was (verb, past tense) by their past (noun).

MY ANSWERS**To have two (hearts)**

Would bestow (amity) upon (noise),  
 A refuge for those who (bury) their (books)  
 in the (downcast) (chairs) of forgotten (dishes).  
 But you (sobbed)—  
 a (heart) to (expire) alone,  
 its rhythm echoing (painlessly) into (empty) (eyes).

**To have (three) (minds)**

Is to share the weight of (longing)  
 (isolation) and (belief) balanced,  
 the (stones) lightened,  
 like (secrets) retreating from a (crowded) (box).

If I could be (fulfilled),  
 That I would leave this (moldy) (basement),  
 With no (part) of me left adrift,  
 I would (stare), unwilling to (run) from a (mirror) that bound me  
 to my (shaking) (shadow).  
 But still, I am (whole)—  
 my (heart)'s twin (yearned) for the (home), their (clock) searching,  
 their (nerves) rising in (anger), to (know) what was (said) by their past (tongue).