Sequential.

A poem in prose by
Brendan J. Wright
Sequential.

i.

My father ate only orange rinds, and never quite said why.

The summer when I was eight, a month before he left, he bought a box of rain from the traveling carnival. He bought it for me, he said. I sat it on a shelf in the cellar, where it echoed against the rock.

A month later the cosmonauts came back again, sauntering like penguins up the gravel drive. Through the screen door they offered a new religion of unsung psalms and soulful redemption. My father shooed them off, howling as they crept back to their faded Gremlin that our planet fiction was well enough without no crazy Ruskie kookanery.

That night we burned the last of the old stones. And though in the morning he would be gone, he hugged me close, his beard tickling the freckled flesh of my cheek as I fell asleep, the sound of rain weeping in the distance.

ii.

Ginsberg and I took a jaunt to the grocer’s store the other day. We puffed unfiltereds and necked in the fruit aisle. He blew winter breath upon the freezer door and traced out shaman lyrics undecipherable to any save himself. Clans of wrinkled women capped in purple fedoras stared razor blades about us, whispering scorn upon this uncouth, crazy haired man and this youth ripe for corruption.

He gave them all a raspberry and scuttled out the electric doors, with me left to carry out the bags of yeast and pomegranates on my own. As we whistled along Ventura, the convertible roof pushed back and the world blurring to talons of twisted light, he kissed me fresh upon the lips and it all tasted of plums.

iii.

The Reverend masturbated to thoughts of Marilyn Monroe. Unbeknownst to him, his wife did the same.

iv.

The chaos of the festival paled away as we slipped among the trees, her hand leading me away from all that was. She turned back twice, smiling as we tripped over autumned leaves and grasping branches, her feathered dress trying as desperately as I to keep pace with her.
Finally, she stopped and pulled me close until her breath was a tickling heat upon my lips. Her raven hair fell in twisps and tangles as I held her in my arms, while dusk cut us into ribbons.

v.

I woke up among the ruins today. Three hundred Spartans on a sheep path, the threshold of forever.

Somewhen Rome is burning, the whole of the city escaping like fireflies bit by bit into the moth-nibbled memories of man. I can smell the marble fresh from the earth. I can hear the violin waltzing with itself somber and sweet above the flame.

On November fifth, the Thames is luminary in the night, pale pitch and beautiful. I dance among the falling embers, kicking up the water till all I see is stardust.

Stalingrad stinks of shit and mud. I slip in the trenches, catching my balance against the dead. One seizes my wrist and pulls me down, his voice pleading, frantic and yet resigned. I put my hand against his sundered chest and he wails into the night, digging his heels against the muck, his fists battling the shadows that only he can make out in the darkness.

After he’s gone, I turn the page.