

Exphrasis 2024

Just Me and the Gulls

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A storm is coming.

The wind has shifted too many times to know where it is coming from. The waft of sulphur fills her nose. She breathes it in deeply, not liking it, but not liking to not have it course through her veins.

The storm is in her. It's been there since the second she found out.

Adrenaline surges and abates within, her nervous energy like the ocean, a constant push and pull. It doesn't flow out enough to matter. She's not running...she's not fighting.

Her walk brought her through the busy streets. Without realizing, and not remembering how she got there, she is sitting on the beach.

Her senses are hyper.
It makes her body tingle.

Her fingers and toes and the ends of her hair hum. The salt in the air brushes her bare arms and legs, the goosebumps like millions of pinpricks on her skin. She can feel the grains of sand.

She tastes the salt, opens her mouth for more, breathing it in. She tastes the fish. She tastes the wind. She tastes her blood, the iron-rich metallic she can't swallow enough to mask.

She can see the water in the clouds, the curve of the swell on the ocean as it builds, the spray in the air. She can see each tail feather, the curve of the beaks, and the glint in the gulls' eyes.

She sees the clouds moving and shaping, the ones on the horizon the colour of danger, the ones over the shoreline reflected so clearly she doesn't know which way is up. She feels dizzy. Her head is swirling like the clouds the water, the gulls.

The blues, greys and browns... the colour of inside her. The colours reflect her thoughts and ideas so fragmented she can't focus.

She smells the seaweed, the shells, the last bit of warmth on the beach.

The cry of the gulls precise, so precise that she looks up and knows which gull is calling. She knows which one is answering. She hears the water part, the splash hit, as

the gulls dive for food, for their survival. She hears the whoosh of air as the gulls' wings open and close on the push to go higher and higher before the rapid and focused descent.

She is a gull.

Her life a struggle to go higher, achieve more, do more, feel more, feed more...be loved more. The rapid descent, the plummet, the second after she found out, is so intense, so quick, so prolonged. She is unable to do anything, feel anything. She can only do nothing, feel nothing. The free fall so fast she can't grasp it, she can't touch it. She's like the fish in the gulls' hold, gasping, floundering, fighting...alone.

The ocean tide moves toward her. She leans back as the tide moves forward. She leans forward as the tide goes back. Her body rocking, each movement stronger than the last... like standing on a precipice and wanting to jump.

She does stand.

She walks to the water.

Her toes don't feel the cold.

She can't taste anything but bile.

She can't see anything, but a veil in front of her eyes.

She can't hear anything but the beating of her heart.

She can't smell anything but fear.

The hem of her dress clings to her thighs.

The ties at the back of her dress float behind her.

Her arms spread out like a gull.

Which way is up?

She stands on the balls of her feet, the rippled sand between her toes.

She is ready to fly.

The storm is so close.

The neckline of her dress is tight with the weight of the water.

The dress she bought the morning she found out.

The dress she bought the morning she found out.

She thinks this and knows she thinks this.

Her fugue blew away with the wind.

She senses a clarity of thought:

She feels the cold;

She tastes the salt;

She sees the rolls of water coming toward her at eye level;

She sees the gulls dive in front of her;

She sees the splash of the water;

She smells the water, the air, the fish, the gulls.
She hears the din of the gulls, the water surging, the thunder;

The storm has abated.
