

2026 SNOWMAN BURN COMMUNITY POETRY

Stress to Zen

Snow is moving on, melting, burning away in this case
Because time is cycling right? And not just time, materials
Everywhere on our planet, in our solar system, in our universe,
And even things in our minds,
The recurring themes in education, in work, and notably.... Stress

Stress is a cycle that rotates agonizingly slowly
Like a turtle wiggling its way over the sand on its trek to the sea
Unlike the turtle though, each time we get to the sea,
Or a C when we put in the effort for an A, we sink into the next cycle
Slowly falling through the water like a sinking ship into deeper
pressure

Given stress is universal and repetitive, we seek the plug
A boat to guide our minds through the crashing waves, a tug
A guide to lay our anchor in the calm harbor
Land is near, go ascend and find your zen in the arbor

"Two Extremes" by Nathan Piché

One end or the
other
Full to the brim or
faintly there
Bustling with passion and creativity until I begin to bleed colors from
every pore or
barely holding the pen betwixt my fingers
Raging red intensity lighting a match under my brain cooking the
grey matter black or
refusing to trudge through the folds of blue that melt the sky and sea
together so I cannot escape
No desire to stop as there is nothing that can stop me ever again or
not even beginning hoping the growing pains wash over me
Volunteering the day to sleep I will never have and will never give
myself the pleasure of feeling or
violently awake
Crying out or
caging these two creatures - each wild in their own sense - in my
throat lest they split me in two
Two ends of a spectrum
two extremes

"This Isn't Snow" by Nathan Piché

Atmospheric water vapor - frozen
To say you could feel it in the air is wrong
It is the air
We breath it, ice crystals coating our lungs
Light white flakes - falling
The sky breaks apart
Chipping and fragmenting into fine particulate matter
It covers the earth, sky becoming ground.
A mass of spots on television - flickering
There's nothing really there, is there?
Outside is no better
The absence of not sunlight and heat, but genuine warmth, is
what slows my heartbeat
It does not have the right to stop my breathing, for it is
something ugly
Insincere words - facetious
To call it snow feels wrong
This isn't snow
We trudge through it, dark wet sludge staining the powder
Herald of winter - for how long?
The sky is on fire
This isn't snow
It's not how I remember it
Something pure - false
There's no such thing
This isn't snow
I don't know what this is

Like a Squirrel

For a minute there, you sounded like a squirrel
who was delicately smuggling an entire half of a hashbrown
and had swivelled the heads of the chisel-beaks and raucous
mockers:
the oh-too-jovial crows

And of course, the only nearby tree
was the one that reeked of voice cracks and aborted puppy love,
so self-absorbed that it served you sizzling on a bobbing kebab
skewer.
Chisel-beaks scraped your taste and tenderized your ample
grizzle

For after all, you were a quarter pounder deluxe kind of squirrel

Right when your ribs were nearly fall-off-the-bone
and you thought your browns would abandon your mouth,
a wedge of light descended on the back dumpster
and the top bag enthusiastically hurled over the edge, barfing its
gloriously greasy organs

The chisel-cultists slunk to the offering
and slurped the bag's sacrifice, answering your prayers
and leaving your generous self to mature and mellow,
your victory hickory smoke lingering well into the evening

“Third Degree” by Nathan Piché

Heat exudes from my palm
Ridges on my fingers
They glow red - bright and bold
Like small stovetop burners
I cannot touch most things
They burn and burn and burn
The warmth is nice at first
Then, all at once, it's not
Heat, smoke, coughing fits
Blistered skin, pooling fat
Screaming, pushing away
They shall all become wax
Stopping it does not work
All or nothing, they say
Radiating off me
It is too much for most
What I get for trying
Our pictures together
I lost them in the blaze
Even this poem here
I hold it now, but soon...
Becomes ash mid-sentence

Patterns in Space

Space is not something out of reach of our fingers
It's here and there, on the road, around our home
In this room the flowing voices perhaps like singers
It is here, a thing of your own,
What could be shown?
Pull out your lanterns
For things will be written on stone
It's not hard to spot some patterns
Sitting and watching will make them known
Each cycle ends with fire and burns
Follow the wind while embers are blown,
You will see that more has grown

“Trigger” by Nathan Piché

They've always had that effect on me.
The ability to take the whole of me,
spike it upon the ground,
break it into a million little shards,
lose my pieces among loose gravel packed into submission by
uncaring wheels
and build me anew
all without even knowing.
Since the last time they disassembled me
so much time has passed
my hair has grown long and light
my body aches like the creaking docks
my eyes have stopped burning now that I know that I'll never-
I see them from across the way
I'd forgotten how much these moments scare me
shake my bones
melt my innards
strangle my heart, throat, and brain all in a single tightly-clenched fist
The particulate matter that forms me shifts and falls away
like sand through a sift
like balls in a bingo cage
like the surface of a still lake breaking apart as I emerge gasping for
air
I become many things, none of them the right thing
a shield
face smoothed to deflect the torrent of chaotic emotion
leaving me untouched
a sword
sharp to cut away the confusion quick and easy
leaving me none the wiser
something heavy and loud
my mouth the barrel from which fire spits out in a show of force,
demanding why they
left me unable to piece myself together
left me crumbling like the ruins of old civilization
left me to sit in the mess I made of myself
Do they even know?
How long it's been?
What has become of me?
The dreams they've not just occupied but dictated?
The paradoxical pain I think they have caused?
That I've counted the days until
Their eyes meet mine
That color has never felt quite so vibrant, not as it does right now
captivating like the bleeding crimson sunset
haunting blue like the ocean's maw
violently explosive and inexorably dangerous like when
the firing pin strikes
Something inside me combusts
when I don't look away
when I cannot shape myself to hold it in or push it down
when they don't even realize
They've pulled the trigger