

# Glass

---

Jay Thomas

---

## Biography

Jay Thomas studied philosophy and music composition in the United States at Northern Arizona University. After receiving his undergraduate degree in philosophy, he lived for several years in Houston, Texas, where the city's racial and economic inequalities prompted him to take up the problem of authoritarian violence as a central concern of his creative work. In an effort to bring into play what narrative necessarily excludes in order function as narrative, his writing seeks establish an intuitive or pre-rational resonance between fragments of meaning. His work has been published online in litvert (<http://www.litvert.com>), the Muse Apprentice Guild (<http://www.muse-apprentice-guild.com>) and the subscription-based journal Poethia. Jay currently lives and works in San Francisco, California.

THE NIGHTMARE STILL burns, invisible, jagged. What I mean is that the nightmare, its meaning, is invisible - to me. And also that it's jagged, that it hurts. I'm burning because of the sun. Fear seeks its own level, which is way above my head. It makes the sidewalk sparkle. I can't breathe because I'm drowning but it feels like I'm burning.

It's true that I wanted to punish him for treating my warnings contemptuously. Anger is white and bare, like a bulb without a lampshade. Light bulbs are commonplace, but when you see one without the lampshade, it looks alien, like something that we're supposed to feel embarrassed about. The wall is also bare, which is not shocking, just depressing, a picture of poverty. So the bare light shines on the bare wall. But the light comes from the wound. It radiates upward, like water spiraling backwards out of a funnel, then falls and shatters on the sidewalk. That's how the shards got there. Seen from a distance, the whole scene is actually graceful, like fountains are supposed to be.

The wound is in my heel. No blood, but a huge piece of glass, deeply embedded. Layers of muscle like soft canyon walls. Time inhabits the wound. The deeper you go, the younger you

are. You were born when you hit bone. I've got to move my head from side to side to see all the way down. Never can see it all at once. The effect is that of taking then releasing a breath, of wind rushing inside an open window to replace the air shoved out by the light. Sometimes when one raises one's hand to discern the direction of the wind, one's hand becomes the wind.

The shares are smoke-colored, the same color as the trails of carbon we stupidly ground into the countertop when we thought we could it clean with our fingertips. I secretly like the way those arcs of carbon looked, imagined that they were picture of equations which in turn described the trajectories of our lives -- even though I thought those trajectories dangerous. I imagined a malevolent cloud curled around a tiny protrusion of bone, demonic faces leering. Ridiculous image, but the fear is that the image is not ridiculous, that we laugh at it to hide from the fact that we still find it frightening. That we are, in fact, children relative to the evil it represents, and that the evil is rushing inside. Once it's there, you're standing on one foot, surrounded by glass. You've got to put the foot down, onto the glass, in order to extricate yourself.

# Sonnet

---

Jay Thomas

---

A lie was screwed into the wall of electrical stuff.  
How, then, should we think about such things as tanks and their collisions?  
Consider these humid photographs of cars or planes.  
And the paper on which they're printed.  
The paper is lined with frowns.  
Its symbols reduce to stick figures.  
Don't laugh. There's no mistake. Smile, please.  
The night before the wreck, there were only two of them.  
Their teeth were white and clean as they waited for him to speak.  
Nice to meet you in this expansive here.  
How dare you say that our time has gone underwater?  
The window was yellow, just like it would be in a paper illustration.  
But no silhouette ever appeared.  
The stars can't see us at all.

# summer rain

---

Jay Thomas

---

the jester sweats in summer rain. victory forgotten, he travels to texas.

a state trooper arms the border with yellow lines, dusts ants off the screen. breath swells his stomach containing tuna and an old brown banana. a star on each finger, he touches his lips. snowflakes sour.

back home, the jester's colon rots in the sink. parliament hand-delivers a cross to ward off carrion then migrates to parlors where breasts grow round as balloons. sprinklers ensue. with ink squeezed from of clear-cut trees, it paints the lumber mill green.

night crawls in through the garage, wearing dizzy funhouse glasses. someone rubs pudding in the jester's eyes, discerning his balls would burn if dipped in eucalyptus. the party beeps incessantly.

waking, the trooper has a good memory of his life, grows nostalgic as curtained shirts sway in small town traffic. he missed the kissing scene, suspicious of its grandeur, and waited instead for a swell of pride just below the stairs. his fire-prevention fetish locks in watching seagulls battle for the jester's bright red carcass.

# Kite

---

Jay Thomas

---

I have been robbed.  
But you leap.

I have killed the legs of life  
because of its voice.

Look before the flesh, panting,  
convulsive, lamented.

A broad flat stone  
fell toward  
the truth.

I am a dog rightly  
served. Rain casting  
his harvest is brave  
as a mountain.

You work in strength.  
You tore him severely

with your teeth. Forgot  
his owner's boastful tone.

By all the handicraft  
of his talons he had the sea

on its walls for having lost  
his promise, rivers

maimed, lying in  
pieces. In the greater

part of the sun we asked  
what stratagem's excuse --

You made a kite from the lesson-  
book of my life.

---

# Mazes

---

Jay Thomas

---

LLOYD SHOWED ME one of his drawings: a careful outline of the Starship Enterprise, in pine-green crayon. It was part of a neat grid of patients' drawings, each push-pinned to one wall of the communal area.

"Oh, that's really nice," I said. I think my opinion mattered because he asked "how do you make those?" when he saw my doodles of sea-shell spirals.

Back at the table, I drew a right-angled labyrinth. The girl with cuts wrapped around her forearms like thin, red blade of grass asked if it was a maze. I told her yes, but that it had no beginning or end and an infinite number of solutions.

"Sounds symbolic. Does it have anything to do with why you're here?"

"Panic attacks." I asked about her arms. She said she hadn't mutilated herself like this in years. Lloyd was here because of waves.

After the clipboard woman turned the lights off, Lloyd said he was possessed.

"By ghosts. Women. She said I needed help .In her apartment. We're walking down an alley. It's snowing. Why are you here?"

Flashbacks, maybe. I didn't add that I feared God wanted me to live like Buddha or Christ, to just spill myself out onto the sidewalk like urine from a punctured bladder. The smooth plastic fork in my right hand, the plate of noodles on a glossy cafeteria tabletop, the reflection of a neon "Open" sign in a framed poster's plexiglas - each doubled as a single letter of the allegedly unpronounceable name whose interpretation is its own execution: judgment. For months I'd felt like a patient abandoned halfway through an operation.

I asked Lloyd if he'd ever done acid.

"I think death is just a transformation into something else."

"What?"

"More knives."

Lloyd pulled his pants halfway down his legs before falling asleep. A few months later, I ran into the girl who cut her arms. She was a clerk at a CD store. She rang me up. Asked if I still drew mazes.