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**Six Poems from I Look at My Body and See the Source of My Shame: ("We've arranged our lives," "My soul, steeped in my pride," "The world is a funny house," "My joy from you lives free," "Our hunger like a cockroach," and "Nothing is ever clean in me")**

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# Mark Anthony Cayanan

from **I Look at my Body and See the Source of My Shame**

(As Teresa of Ávila as Sasha Jansen)

We've arranged our lives to be just as unhappy | as we  
let everyone see it, the bald laughter | creeps beneath the  
hysteria we're showcased in | a cinema, timing our gasps  
with everyone | watching someone's troubles collapse our  
ha-ha eyes | once the spirits settle in us a violin | plays must  
we be convinced it means something to some | times a false  
start we're almost safe with a couple

extra drinks and it's when we're trailing time we're most  
| dangerous to ourselves when we've been made fallen | cold  
our names resound like pricked balloons, who are you | is  
there anyone you can do so nobody | looks at you that way  
or learns us we refuse we | refuse one last loss and everyone  
will be dead

in four years that's all we're waiting for, isn't it |  
something else has come into his eyes, the newest | reason  
for his punctual angers let's say he claims | this mystical  
right to cut our legs off but whose | right is it to ridicule us  
again and now | when you're crippled and selling love songs  
at the bridge | it's not strange how unjust it gets, sunlight  
this one | afternoon then another and another and

who are you to want more from this is a joke we | rest  
our hands on his chest, pray for his impatient | soul or push  
him backward like a door we come to | if only for these  
mornings we can pretend to | overlook the long nights who  
says we can't escape | our fate? I'll share mine with you, pry  
it out of me

My soul, steeped in my pride, is one of those | straws  
floating round a whirlpool and is sucked | into the center,  
where everything calm | is the body found wrenched from  
You, its love | subdued with such violence it's endured | as  
does the theater of streets where mothers | rifle through  
tabloids for missing persons | without whom I'd feel joy  
so absolute

it pummels my life into tenderness | like a house seized  
by fire: because no one | is in me, the wind moves freely  
through me | my face a fist-sized wonder of my God | why  
am I sad as a gay man grown old | my Better, I wed you to  
my questions



The world is a funny house, he says, There are people  
| having babies all over its sticky floor, I pray | that God  
sends me any sickness provided He give | me patience,  
I, the generic instrument, the words | I praise Him with  
speak of unrehearsed affection and | the devil is the  
first ocean I swam in the cold | kills me into a sudden  
warmth, My body, he claims, | Is that woman who's lost  
her shame before God, they say

can't be trusted at all, His mercy tepid, anger | at  
the ready, my face a study of blue before | it's seen sun,  
him looking at me with a notable | absence of longing,  
myself showing him greater love | is passable, let heavens  
make him trust the kindness | of known flesh, I pull my  
life back up out of myself

My joy from you lives free as flood on a highway | we  
can together topple power lines, I can | lie inside your face  
noiseless in the afternoon | and smell the sulfur our souls  
meditate the sweat | out of my hunger completely as if it  
had | never been thought of where we are the dead voices |  
break through their own newness and a moth tries to get |  
past our blinds, we who distrust the law because

it's no longer ours maliciously we look | at it as a man who  
looks with malice would where | we want is a time of desires,  
when the will loathes | the world, a room the sun explores  
and is buried | we grieve for it arid-eyed I make up my mind |  
that it isn't coming back, gray streets over sky

from a bottle of white

I only want words reprieved from my possessives  
and must dissolve, an incalculable sinking  
back into the dark

skull on its long neck, plunging into how often  
do you want me to be, O Lord, brilliantly

your

light makes everyone

act strange, we who arrive under the blanket and  
hide to be sainted publicly suffer for it