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Poems Commissioned in the Street by Strangers and Composed Spontaneously on a Manual Typewriter

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Poems Commissioned on the Street and Composed Spontaneously on a Manual Typewriter

Benjamin Aleshire

C A S S A N D R A

It took death to bring your namesake
across Elysian Fields—
but you do it un-cursed, nightly, willing—
with your powers of prophecy intact,

& your hair plumed in feathers & silk,
as hierophants & hanged men yield
to your whim, the moon's sickle dividing
the sky's revolving zodiac.

A knight a knave a rogue a rake
they want the wand you wield—
Sweet inversion. Cards divining
your mind's augury, exquisite fact.

(You scatter pentacles in your wake:
The more you give, the more you take)

—*For Cassandra, the Tarot reader*
1.17.16
New Orleans, LA

TINDER

Benjamin Aleshire

Where there's smoke, there's a pyre:
 once our tinder struck flame
I had no need of a crystal ball,
 the glowing screen of my phone.
The moon alone illuminates me now
 that you've tended me so tenderly.
Clocks too cannot command me,
 nor the ascendant sun, gaudy charioteer
who through night-black velvet curtains
 I spurn
 as we burn.

*—for the Norwegian guy's girlfriend who he met on Tinder,
who never checks her phone and always sleeps late*

1.3.16

Havana, Cuba

D A R (To Give)

Benjamin Aleshire

Gravity gives itself to the moon
 & the moon gives it to the surf
& the surf gives so much to the Malecón
 that the Malecón cannot contain it:
the Malecón gives & gives & gives
 but it cannot quench you
along this stretch of highway
 so you grind it to dust,
to a seawater paste to a salve
 & you give it to the canvas
who turns into a mirror & gives it back,
 who turns you into a rich man, full
 with the reciprocated universe.

*—for Carlos the painter
in an art gallery along the Malecón
Havana, Cuba*

UNREQUITED

Benjamin Aleshire

You are the Albert Einstein of lovers:
believing that love, like energy or matter,
was created in anti-apocalyptic ecstasy
& cannot be destroyed.

Or maybe you are the Nikola Tesla of love
divining its vibrations
in the places we can't see
or choose not to look.

Maybe you are the St. Francis of Assisi of love,
letting it roost unbidden
in the palm of your hand when you least
expect it but I don't think so.

I think you are the Vivian Barclay of lovers,
reading poems' braille,
reading poems like maps.

*—for Vivian Barclay, who still believes that love can be
unrequited even after a breakup, who always asks street
poets for this same topic*

12.29.15

Havana, Cuba