

In Our Wire Refuge
by Maxwell O'Toole

Lips bitten until they bleed,
Fingers twitching as we click forward,
Desperate to find somewhere,
To commit the sin of our existence.

There is nothing like that blue light,
Illuminating, without scorching like the sun,
Carving out a space for being, without shame,
With the sparse tools we whittled ourselves.

I feel your pulse travel through me, flickering with fear,
We are intertwined, in all ways, even if I would not know your face on the street.
I stretch my hands across this digital vastness,
Eager, but unable, to mend our contradictory closeness.

We bicker, just as siblings do,
Over the most inconsequential aspects of ourselves,
Separate, physically, from those who degrade us,
But, mentally, unable to escape their deafening voice.

For this world is one of echoes.
Smatterings of laughter, sharp, spit onto our faces from afar,
While we try to find one another amidst walls of carnival mirrors,
Too afraid to step outside into the hostile night.

Aching to rid ourselves of sickness,
Aching to rid ourselves of self,
We purge our stomachs until there is nothing left,
And let the acid dissolve us from the inside out.

But, even so, this wire refuge remains beautiful,

A gem catching the white-hot sparkle of devotion, resistance, and love,
Our words froth and bubble past our tongues once uncorked,
Sparkling and effusive, loud and unconcerned with irrationality, impossible to ignore.

We scare them, I know we do,
And a part of me thrills at this notion,
Because I know it means that we are bringing change;
What an honour to live so freely it angers those who construct cages.

I let myself be held by new-found arms,
And close my eyes, imagining laying my head gently on your chest.
I wonder if I can feel your heartbeat, steady, if I'm quiet enough,
Despite the infinite and incomprehensible distance between us.

Healing our wounded, counting our dead,
We make up the place for any who find themselves on our doorstep:
Unable to open the curtains, we still manage to make some kind of home,
Decorating with glossy magazine covers to brighten our prison's walls.

A table, unending, runs through these bustling halls,
As we slice cheese, break bread, and gulp deep red wine,
Joining in the act of creation, consumption, and change,
Leaving empty seats for those who, starving, laid the silverware and went to bed.