

Caroline Johnston- best

Home is Where Your Stand-Up Is

Jokes are the way my Dad copes.
Not dad jokes,
though still absolutely foolish.
Each time he comes back-
off a flight
out of the gym
out from his home office cave-
a new joke spills from his mouth like beer from a tap.
Drinking buddy jokes I call them.
Stupid, often inappropriate remarks,
tools to elicit responses,
though often all they conjure is a
meeting of my eyes with my mother's.
At least he gets a response.
At least for a moment he has a place here,
even if only as Court Jester.

Caroline Johnston- best

An Unfortunate Comfort

If I had a diagnosis, we would do everything together.
We would break together, and build back up together.

She would tell me everything's gonna be okay
someday. She'd be my best friend. I would share

her with many others, and we'd all be alone together.
She'd dictate my life, but that's okay. What is a

life anyway? If I had a diagnosis I wouldn't flounder,
wondering what's wrong with me. I would

actually read that book rather than stare at it. I
would pull my earbuds out of my ears to surface

rather than drowning myself in a sea of music.
Medication would control her. Her name

would probably start with "clinical," or "rapid."
There would be no consideration of psych wards

and no more perplexed psychologists or
psychiatrists' clipboards. She and I would fight

through life together, breaking through the glass of
life I now only press my nose against.

Caroline Johnston- best

Sometimes, Planes

My mother was alone for so long her head snapped
up and the dog began to bark as the wheels of his

suitcase rolled. Henry returned, trailing behind
him a wake of chaos, havoc, and misery. She

jumped up to take his coat, offer him food, embrace
him; anything to make things normal, break the ice

between them again. However, to no avail. He
still turns away and brushes past, reeking of planes.

He is tired from the flight, so he goes upstairs to
sleep, while Jennifer cries in her daughter's arms.

Caroline Johnston- best

Love is Like Ice Cream

Sweet and comforting, what you crave
at night when you're alone.

Freezer burned, impenetrable
without warmth.

Building up in your
arteries, putting your heart on the line.

Melting, falling apart, sliding down
to the concrete.

Curdling to a soupy paste, to straight
poison.

It'll go straight to your hips sweet girl.
It just isn't worth it.

Caroline Johnston- best

Lithium Joints

Red hot tendrils erupted from my back,
suffocated my eardrums,
conquered my limbs,
infused themselves into my marrow and
claimed their place as my skeleton.
They spat gasoline in my jaw and
ran it like an engine.
They yanked me as tall as a skyscraper
and tore my eyes from their sockets as you cowered before me.

The doctors burst through my fire,
it's best for you, they cry,
but it's never been best for me.
The leaves grew from the carpet and anchored my feet and
I set it all on fire and
the smoke made it all smell calm.

The doctors' pens pried open my eyes and
their latex gloves slid down my throat.
I swallowed their treacherous gifts
and once again,
my pupils became galaxies when I saw you.

Caroline Johnston- best

Needles on the Floor

God is relentless,
there is no God.

My brain is scrambled eggs and pine trees,
broken ornaments.

My face is tangled garland,

I'm in a bubble and I can't get out and
everything is blue.

My arms bleed with patterns
and colors, my feet don't
touch the floor,

I have sapphire colored glasses on.

I thought I found my puzzle piece,
but now I'm forgetting where my
curves should be.

I am a wilting Christmas tree.

Caroline Johnston- themed

I have a beast living inside of me.

And anyone I talk to about it runs away screaming.
That's why I write-
Words don't run.

I write because sometimes my words are the
only things that hear what I have to say.
Because no one ever has the right answers,
so I have to write them myself.
I write because I'm tired of bottling things up,
I'm tired of overflowing,
and exploding,
I'm tired of my shards flying off and impaling the
people who didn't listen to me to begin with.
I'm tired of feeling like an asshole for having emotions,
and even more so for wanting to talk about them.
So I write,
because I know the words don't mind.

I write because the words don't try to
fix me
or relate to me.
They simply sit, and they listen,
and that's all I need.

I write because I am.

I write for the sake of my throat,
because it deserves a rest
from all the screaming it wants to do,
for help,
in pain,
just for someone to hear.

Croline Johnston--themed

I write to empty the bucket that is my mind.

Every day, slowly, drip by drip, it is filled
with rage,
with confusion,
with hatred,
with darkness.

It weighs me down and takes up space that could be saved for the other things
like happiness.

And nothing can accept what my mind holds other than words.
And so I write.

I dump all of my mind's contents out and water my words with them,
and no one appreciates them like words do.

They soak it up through their roots and bloom into beautiful gardens,

and people can look at those gardens and tell me how beautiful they are,
and with each compliment my bucket gets heavier,
because where were those people the last time my bucket was full,
because they don't know what it took to water that garden.

But at least my words get to grow a little taller,
and so maybe people will keep telling me how beautiful my garden is,
even though they'll never know I wish I had never had to plant it.