

glow stick by Sara Hall

Sometimes, you have to be broken
before you can grow.
Sometimes you have to be bent
in half, contorted
backwards
and sideways,
wrapped into Carrick bend knots
so your ribs splinter
and your spine crumbles.

Sometimes you have to be at the bottom
clawing
at the dirt like it is salvation,
and pouring
coal into your blood
thinking it will turn to diamonds
from the weight that constricts
you.

Sometimes you feel so empty,
hollow like a gutted
house with the mortar
flaking, with panes that scream
in the wind, and floor boards
so decrepit
not even termites
want to house there.

Sometimes you feel alone,
so horribly abandoned
like a forgotten gravestone
overgrown with mottled
weeds, the etchings
flesh with the face
so it seems they are erased,
like the memories of the person buried,
like the memory of who
you used to be.

And sometimes, the overpowering
weight of carrying your shadow
on your shoulder blades
becomes too much
and you shatter
to a trillion pieces, falling like a jigsaw,
toppling

to the ground, all cardboard
and waxen
tears and blood drops like cerise
marbles tumbling
to a finish line that keeps on moving.

But then...

But then...

But then bone turns to stardust a
nd you shimmer
in sable
skies, erupting into iridescent
galaxies.

Because sometimes, if you go down
far enough,
life is like a bungee
cord
and springs
you back up again
higher than ever.

And you can't know the truest,
purest meaning of life
until it has been drained
from your marrow,
until your eyes can't process melanin
and you see only in greys,
until your essence floats in the western
skies on a northbound wind to nowhere
and you are too tired to chase it.

Only after you have been broken
can you rise to the top,

because even a glow stick
has to be cracked before its incandescence
gleams.