

Barbi Clifton
Jigsaw Submission
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“Breakthrough”

Ave Maria, the angelic notes of the chorus fall on the uninitiated like
zinnias tossed by a careless bride and tied together
by the ribbon that binds the love letters I never sent.

Yippee ki-yay for the horse and rider that got out of Dodge. I
climbed the walls of the tower only to discover the ladder was there all along.

Xenon can be so noble despite its inertia, yet I can't make myself face the
darkness. Light, shadows, exposure, all of the same cloth, the shredded
white lace from the gown of the virgin kissed for the very first time.
Everyone knew I would fold if they could only recite enough novenas.

Veils of hypocrisy hang from my bedpost, my hand slips through the grate,
fornicating with the empty air. That's all they'll let me do, locked in my cell,
undulating in the breeze that blows through the window sealed by a kiss. I'm
giddy at the thought of being thrown off the edge of the universe.

Turn down the sheets, it's time to rock the cradle, swing from the star, sing
hallelujahs until the river swallows me whole. When I walked into the moldy box,
see-saw, the light changed from green to red. Stop, I want to go, but captive
in a sea of omission, act of contrition, look straight ahead and bow your head.

Reign in your impure thoughts lest they lead you astray, but
jingle-jangle, rattle my cage, astray sounds like the best idea yet. Don't
quote me on this, but I remember an episode of *Bewitched* in which
kings and queens were actually mere mortals, one twitch of the nose,
please make it so. But nothing like that happens in this limbo, Jimbo.
Last I checked, moving on up was nothing more than a deluxe apartment in the sky.
Or was it a diamond in the sky? Always the sky. Lucy, I'm home.

Maybe I'll find heaven in aisle eight of the Safeway or a crowded café in the Village.
Nothing left to turn me on when guilt wraps me in its satin sheen.

Not even Martha Quinn can save my soul because video killed the radio star.

Maybe I spent too much time in my head, but who pierced that lobe
Out of which blood and water flowed? I'd turn to salt, but sugar is sweeter,
lick it off my bottom lip, and I'll tell you a secret, it's a mystery really.

Prayers smashed against bricks go unanswered, everything has a price,
keep the candles lit, lined up like greedy soldiers, red turns to purple,
quiet as the coins falling in the box. Who comes to collect the ransom? Is it

just a price to pay for more melting wax? I read the word, but the sounds
reverberated in my head. No sense, nonsense, just listen, listen, listen. But

I want to speak, wafer on the tongue, can't get around it to say my peace.
Somehow Oprah changed everything. A new earth took shape when fear was lost.

Hanging from my neck a chakra that needed clearing so I spit out
the detritus of thousands of years. No rapture, just lotus petals falling from the sky,
grounded by the belief that this master is ascending. The stories remain
unchanged and the idol still reigns, but my head no longer holds a continent of
fragile verses that sound more like Jeopardy answers than the
voices that used to sing me to sleep. If you shift the paradigm the earth becomes
elastic, which screws up all the maps, but that may be just
what the world needs. No more lines to draw, now I can run from the empty
dungeon to find my own way, and no one will be chanting that I was wrong.
X-rays would give a clearer view of my soul, but I'm willing to bare my chest,
change my shirt in the car as the clueless professor walks by. What can
you learn from him that you don't already know? It's the remembering that matters,
baby, so don't think too hard. Smash the candles, grab the shards if you dare.
Zodiac wheels turn slowly in the ever thinning air, don't look down, up, up and
away, cut the cord that ties you to everything but connects you to nothing.