

Adjustments and other Insomniads
James Cole

“Except that,” she said, because
we’re always in each other’s heads,
“they’re failing forward, the act of testing
is like Hell finding portal in your liver.”

And outside, I could hear someone
muting an argument with a trashcan lid,
like so many band members marching
down an alley for a light, or a puff of
something righteous, but oh, I wouldn’t
be doing anything about it, I was trying
too hard at the time to prove I wasn’t
worth the awkward blocks of text

“It’s filthy in here,” she said, and it
was indeed filthy. “And if you’re so
terrified of the way out, let me help
you invest in the ways back in.”

“It doesn’t have to be an accident,”
she said, so full of dim divide, like
trouble growling over a lid. “Sighing
over wide alleys to prove you can
still say, but I can’t dream as well
as you. For me, it is the echo that
speaks. I am only its omen.”

“I wouldn’t know,” I said, not wanting to
exit out the back so late at night. “But I can
sleep on the pull-out. I don’t think it will be
ironic if we refuse to treat it as such.”

“But what I do know,” I said, because
Hell, I’m always saying something,
“Is that sleep is just a special mental
indifference, something we need with
out expressly knowing why.”

And we were needed despite the filth,
despite the fifth sound against the door
calling all the tenets to clusterfucks beneath.
I became the heaviest head between us,
and she fell backwards like a tourist
spanning wind, and woe to the ants
who saw us then, their empire like interior
Gomorrah full of passionate spleen.