

Poems

by Jo McFarlane

Subconscious Objectors

Sometimes it's hard to be a human.
Shellfire coming at you all directions
Enemies invisible and real

So you need to retreat from the front line,
Declare a truce on the injustice of it all
Refuse to play along

But the uniform you've ditched
becomes a straitjacket
Now the battle zone is in your head

At what point does protest turn to madness?
How have the powers that be
Come to control you from within?

Imprisoned in a stalemate
(forced or self-imposed?)
It's time to lay down arms:

Shuffle through the corridor
Take your tablets. Go to bed.
Your best chance of survival is *Play Dead*

Once We Were Free

When we were mad
we danced ourselves giddy in the lexicon of nonsense.
Time spilled like a river through our consciousness.
The days become flowers; the sunlight was ours.
We might have ripped the moon out of the sky
and swam in its silvery tides.
We might have, and we did,
go skinny-hipping with the lack of need for food.

When we were mad
we were mythical beasts in a fairytale book, flouting
the boundaries of dream and sleep. We did not care
for industry or hard-edged truth, we paid no heed to
the shackles of expectation. Conformity belonged to mice;
Mortality – the fate of fools. We spun our web of possibility
beyond the universal laws of gravity and space;
debauched ourselves in unfamiliar landscapes.

When we were mad,
little did we know
the snares of sanity were waiting.
Now we sit in glass-eyed tombs,
watching the world go mad around us,
and we – afraid of our next breath, open mouths
just to swallow pills and gape in wonder at the idiots,
the freedom-fighters that we were back then.