



ANEMONE SIDECAR

CHAPTER 4
of
THE
ANEMONE SIDECAR

In Memory of Jim McCurry
Poet
October 3, 1943 – May 16, 2009

Jim McCurry: Final Report

I've lost my party that's waiting for the boat,
though I saw Rose just now gone to fetch fresh
water. Heavy barges are sliding past on rails into
the sea. A reign of foreign confusion—Indians,
South Americans, clans and families of blanketed
children, poor ones of every description seized by
an apocalyptic fever. Some have resigned
themselves to music hall nostalgia upstairs behind
old oaken doors, heavy with grog,
light piano keys tinkling—'Come what may, I'm a
bleeder.' I cannot make out—standing on this
sandy spit, the channels and canals crisscrossing
confuse me—Where is the path that leads to the
lady in my party who awaits me and the boat?
'Lovesick' or 'lovestruck'? Too late. Air sucks
where the bullet struck. Paterfamilias, South
American or Hindu, whose family's sign reads
EAT THESE BEFORE THE HOST APPEARS,
hands me dried red peppers, I swallow. Surely I'll
wake into another dream, the bilge yawns, smack
my final arc into the foggy greygreen water.
Lovely

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Under Water

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The Anemone Sidecar, Chapter Four, 2009,
built on the patience of multitudes.
Cover image by Daniel Boyer

Introduction: Under Water

This is reading. People have in them in everyone the words and sometimes the address facility and aim the one of many. Some in them will send the words or lay them out to everyone and everyone who is an else, it is a string away and more away and toward.

Here they come the words like that and they are seen, it is a miracle. They travel in a wilderness and on the way from one and one and one to everyone to those who read and read and read. All so slow and we and some or not at all and some and then the more so. The start is from inside, the sending out within. A thing with address (not a place where we could live) as address is a mode—ether is as real as—and in the way of moving there is flow and here we are, we're reading. Still, still, still. We do not live we move it is a wilderness a miracle. And still.

It is regretted it is lovely it is foolish. It is expensive. It is nice it may be choice (which is expensive), the sending out from in, the distance during which it does not tire, seeing which is change as it was thought before but different and is seen again but different and the wilderness, the far away the beasts—we may admit we may regret. It is expensive. It may not be prevented it does not abide remain or stay it is the span between a place a change and then another. It may be choice. It may not be. It may be made to be when one of us is dead or one of us is not.

So here we are, we're reading. Still. I and others read, a thing is on its way to them to us so late (always so and sometimes not so much), the address matches in the words that lay on it then out. Many many, much too many, never quite enough. All on string on line and out, they fall and send themselves along to who will read. In wilderness. And all the change is in the by. And on and on and on. It may not be prevented. Still.

And when the wilderness is underwater, *in this case*, then in this case it is a something else plus underwater and the wilderness, so yes a sort of wilderness and underwater plus and here it comes. Then we see the shook-out lines the loosening, the undulate, and it is greeting and a gift.

It is the wave of the anemones.

John Shumate: The Great Staring

He sits eating noodles and looking out the window where for the last half hour an army of chickens has feathered together, rows and rows of them, amassed for the Great Staring. He feels special if not entirely sure of the attention. Another noodle slides through the gap between his front teeth. The chickens follow it all the way up his chin.

Steven Salmoní: Two Poems

Corner

Black, impatient leaf
strikes the many angles
of its rose.

Windless strokes grow
among the vines,
travails,

the momentary crags
shuttered.
Oleander

of ideal string,
as if to reply to
the torn element.

All lineaments alight,
what the mute double
sang and rung.

The blue storm in
wood-trammeled fences,
galvanized.

Latitude

Why should one refract her
when she stands so close,

when, in light-door's nativity,
colored panels give way

and bisected mountains
embrace old news,

when rosy blooms burn
lamine bones

and ghosts set sail on
tensile wings.

Past the white dispersal
of light, macular

bulbs, false icicles,
photovoltaic trills -

the like as to like
as to the roof of the world.

Beneath the gilded beams,
beneath the spindled trees,

their pardons lurking
in the swollen branch.

Gregory Cole: Two Untitled Poems

universe
makes moments
raw
like a punted
indígena
resumen
far gone

la calma keeps

frases to or

Ania Vesenny: Monotonies of Winters

The eight o'clock door thuds are tight and measured. Wrapped in a tea towel I open the door. It's not the mailman.

"Excuse me," I say. I glide into the bedroom, pull the sheet off my bed, and drape it over my shoulders. "How can I help you?"

"I am very sorry, Miss." The man taps his freshly shaven chin with his index finger. Pieces of toilet paper are pasted to three bleeding cuts--three maroon pistils, white petals fluffed up. "I hear you are expecting the mailman."

"I am."

"I will leave, then."

"Please do."

I lock the door behind him and stare at the top of his head through the peep hole. His rusty wild hair traps snowflakes.

#

Two ladies I know from the club come over for tea. They perch on the sofa and chirp, and loop the air with their pinkies.

"We heard you were expecting the mailman today."

"Yes. At around eight o'clock."

"What's in your tea?" They wipe their foreheads with tea towels.

"I added wild berries, some red and some blue."

"How lovely."

"How lovely."

#

The grey hardened snow banks have grown since last week. They scrape the sleeves of my coat as I squeeze between them. Someone has painted ice patches with beet juice. The door to the post office is locked.

Alexis Vergalla: Two Poems

The Way it Happened

She met an oak tree.
He watched as a fox.

On certain afternoons
she began to wander off,
lying in shady spots with
her shoulders bared.
He wanted to believe the sun
was merely too strong.
In January he followed her for the first time.
His feet rang loudly in his ears
and she sang to herself.
He kept following
if only to hear her voice.
When she paused, knelt,
and her fingers grazed
against the ground
he turned to watch the sky.

For three months she became invisible.
He learned to cook santori.

After dinners they sat together
on the wickered porch,
letting the night turn
damp between their bodies.
He was never sure if she stood
or leaned against the railing.
The sunset drew against the housepaint.
He would fall asleep
and they would have lengthy conversations
that he would forget come morning.
She began to paint, the brush
waving crazily in the dark.

He would try to read
the inkstain and watercolor
to find out where his mouth had been.

He met a girl with quiet eyes.
She watched as herself.

Her paintings became large fields
of black ink, scraped in intricate patterns
with the back of her brush.
She watched as he moved his lips
but his tongue had stopped,
used for new things now.
It hurt her skin to be seen again.

He found more excuses to return inside.
Afternoons opened inside tuna fish cans,
beside apple slices. They let the faucet
run for hours at a time.
She took sponges and shaped
children out of the bright squares.
He threw out paper towels
left too long on the cardboard spool.

He, then she.
Alternatively, she. Then he.

The Movements

An old grocery list in my bag contains:

apples
milk
~~avocados~~
~~lemon~~
~~cilantro~~
~~garlic~~
tomatoes
~~cucumbers~~
toothpaste
chips
chapstick

The guacamole was fresh and the bowl a bright green glass. The knife tasted like lemon and the seeds were thrown out with the cilantro stems.

His back curved beneath moonlight like a reflection.
I let it lay there
and padded down the hallway
barefoot and in the dark,
reaching for walls I knew,
my shins finding boxes I didn't.

At the sink I found an avocado pit
on the window sill
suspended in a jar by toothpicks.

I drank staring at the window sill,
one hand on the steel basin
the other against smooth glass.
The avocado pit sprouting slightly

Other things of interest:

a lego ewok
a class ring of a high school I never attended
seven pens
nail polish the shade of scarlet that blazes on fingertips. that burns.

Greg Mulcahy: Incitement

Not a box exactly. One thought of a container. Of contents. As though personality a collection of things contained. Things? Error. He was a collection of error yet he could not dispose of the error. Not and be who he was.

What he was.

The visitors the problem. Or the incitement of his realization and therefore his problem.

Not that he begrudged the visitors their visit. Never that. He welcomed the visitors and would extend every courtesy to them.

He understood what was required of him. The boundaries social. And reciprocal. Reciprocated. He knew.

He knew.

The immediate problem of the visitors a temporal one. When the visitors arrived, time would be altered. After the visitors had traveled for the visit, the visitors needed to visit. To relax. To spend time with the people they had come to see.

And he had to visit with them. Show them things. Take them places. He understood. But he could not work while the visitors were visiting. Nor could he control his own schedule.

His time.

Because he was obligated and he would honor his obligation because to do anything else would be rude.

Inappropriate.

Perhaps they would go to The Museum of Song. Or The Museum of Light. The Cathedral or The Observatory or The Institute.

He did not know what the visitors might like to visit. The visitors themselves might not know what to see. They might accede to whatever he suggested. But he did not want to suggest anything. Suggesting something might trap him into doing whatever he suggested. He would have to do it with the visitors. They would be interested or they would pretend to be interested and then he would have to pretend to be interested.

The notion filled him with a dead, sick feeling.

This visit might be a trap.

The visitors might inadvertently trap him.

They might intentionally trap him.

He could not be sure there was no malice in these visitors. Everyone had some level of malice and sooner or later that malice revealed itself. A matter of time, and, for the individual involved, temperament. No doubt the

visitors would be on their best behavior, but with the difficulty of travel, the stress of the visit, the strangeness of the new, the visitors might actively or passively cross over into a malicious state. It happened. He had seen it happen. And he was not so foolish as to believe it could not happen to him.

Simply because someone was visiting did not mean that person, by the nature of his visit, was magically transformed into a different, a better, a higher, a more elevated person than the person had been before the visit at home. If anything the contrary was much more likely. There might well be a predictability to such a thing.

They would use his house, he would encourage them to use his house as though it were their own, when obviously it was not their own. In fact, they would not use it as their own. Not ever. They would use it casually, thoughtlessly, as though it were less than their own.

As though it were second rate.

As though it had no value.

And why should it? To them? They had no investment in nor responsibility for the property. If something were broken, they would not hang about and see it fixed.

He did not begrudge them the use of the house. It was only, there was something, well, there was something about the attitude, wasn't there? Something arrogant. Overbearing.

Unbearable.

Not that he'd tell them that.

The attitude was natural. He did not blame them for the attitude. They, for all he knew, could not help having the attitude. The attitude came with the visit; that was all.

Just as the demand for special foods. The visitors brought their tastes with them, and how could it be otherwise? If the visitors ate exactly what he ate it would be as though they had become him or like him—native. That would never do. Not for a visitor.

It could not truly happen. To become a native impossible for a visitor. The attempt would be ungainly. False. Ridiculous. Sad.

Yes, sad, really. What kind of visitor would come to his house to give up identity? He would not ask that of any visitor. He could not. The entire exercise would call the purpose—the idea—of a visit into question. If everyone was to be exactly the same, was it not better for everyone to stay where they were and keep doing what they were doing?

He realized that while he had thought he knew these visitors, in fact he did not know these visitors at all, and, if the visit itself would change the visitors, how could he or anyone else know them as anything but visitors? To presume their nonvisit lives knowable as ridiculous as anything could be. He knew he did not know anyone and had never known anyone.

He never would.

It did not make any difference. None. He suspected, although he could not truly endorse nor commit to his suspicion, no knowledge made any difference, and if he knew nothing—nothing at all—he would be every bit as well off as he was now.

Impossible to know nothing.

He could not be certain who these visitors were or who these visitors would be.

He knew that.

That would have to be enough.

Until the visitors arrived.

That and—

That and the other.

The other the idea.

He was fixed—certain—certain in the idea the visitors would come and everything would be irredeemably altered.

Charlie Burgess: In Rome

she lay naked in the center of the Pantheon
a golden chain, sprung from her navel, rising to the oculus

i climbed the roof
and looked in

Noel Sloboda: DÍvorce

Jackanapes

It could be said that there is no better way to say this

Pedant

Jacket

It could be

Said that

There is no better way to

Say this

Pennant

Jack

It could be said

That there is

No better way to say

This

Penance.

Norman Lock: *from* "Pieces For Small Orchestra" (#41)

Where all is only words, why not a menagerie? Write the word ELEPHANT. Now LION. Now TIGER. And DOG wearing a skirt and hat, balanced on a ball. And SEAL, with a ball balanced on its nose. I might, with practice, endue them with motility or, if unable to create an organism so advanced, move them – as the Telepath does spoons – across a space of beaten earth. He sends spoons sliding across the table, but the principle is the same. Words are counters of the mind at its game: “a simple game that I made up in the dark” Raymond Queneau said of literature. Outside is a dark and moonless age, and so I came to live in this hotel – to be away awhile from the grave. The Hat Check, who wished for a circus, is glad. “Thank you, Norman, for this dream!” I bow, and my ringmaster’s hat topples toward my boots anchored in the center ring. Quicker than the movement of desire, she seizes it before its black silk has even grazed the ground (despite gravity’s peremptory summons) and, with a little broom, whisks it clean of theoretical dust. (In actuality, there is none.) Her eyes say to me: “I will do anything to please you for this gift!” I am about to embrace her when the Funambulist’s stern shadow scythes between us. It is always so in my dreams: no sooner do I take a woman in my arms than my tightrope-walking wife tiptoes into view. “Not even here am I allowed an infidelity!” I shout. The Engineer looks up from his elegant diagram of a trapeze “that will defy death!” to remark on the Shepherdess, in whose company I am often seen. (She belongs to Pastoral literature; mine is Apocalyptic. Our trysts are therefore fictional!) “We are drinking cocktails in honor of the musicians,” the General announces with the suavity of a man used to wearing epaulettes. “They are – for the moment – awake.” “You are always drinking cocktails!” chides the Engineer – his mind, like a planisphere, revolving shining equations whose solution is immortality. (A mortal life has agonies enough without craving their infinite extension!) “The Barman has donated a jar of pickled onions.” “Norman must finish my circus first!” the Hat Check remonstrates. (There lies in each of us the wish to appropriate what we most desire.) The General waves her kisses with his fingertips and goes, to thrust a tiny sword into an onion. His grown-up’s one he broke across his knee to pacify the Chanteuse, who prefers hymns to love than threnodies. The door closes on the barroom’s yellow light and music, leaving us to our circus devices. “Your animals are nicer than the Taxidermist’s,” the Hat Check says to flatter me. “Please write me a monkey.” And I do – a green one from Senegal – for words are generous and by their incantation do we live in hiding during a monstrous age.

Louis E. Bourgeois: Two Poems

Hell: by Bosch

Perch-men shed tears on the scene
as locust fill the sky, their
bird faces entangled in horrible
bubbles that flow through the uterus
of lecherous pigs who have been
eating their brother, the penguin,
who is still grappling with the rasped
harp lodged inside the belly
of a dead carp that Satan has
not yet purged of the demon Jesus Christ.

Rubbing the Meager Liquid

The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders
- Pound

rigorous birth at the hawawa opera
the finest breed of dog-man ever
issued here in these fine north american
states of the indicative and the pleasing
eye has stopped lingering bliss fed up
the arse-hole joyce was skating on top
of words hence his downfall and beckett
had no idea what a word was except in an
untechnical technical sense of one real
groovy with several languages so what and
in usage the death of language means nothing
to me and I drink from its blood every night

I just happen to think titus andronicus is the
best shakespeare play a-going personally if you
catch mes grips and so what about infinite
comings and goings of god's grandeur at the set of day
and the green wind never greener or blacker than
that which it seems to be at the outset
(onslaught, anschluss, adolf, bc. of god's grandeur)
entre amis you and I together trying to
stretch forth fool's gold to the recent
peasants of our dreams and when the tremors
come again watch out for this time it might

be for real and all your little toys plastic
or not might get broken or sunk to the bottom
of a louisiana lake like one of my tonka
dump trucks did when I was two I'm into angles
large tribes of natives coming at me from
right/left angles while I was crossing the
thoroughfare in port allen, louisiana once when
I was minus 10 before being betoken of certain
drugs that I was prone to inject up my arse-hole
or through my eyes and very soon from now they
take me out through the court yard to cut
my miserable head off they try to scare

me with all this death talk the silly prickless
bastards and all their delusions of thinking
they could ever scare such a one as myself
and all that time the sky was merely using
you for ornamentation the twilight of the idols
the gravity of icons all swell bilge like
in front of the guillotine and rewind the
tape not that I want to change a thing but
that bastard master brian I want to see
that spic's face again the bastard who tried
so hard to kill me at a young age with his
incessant comings and then fits and starts when

was the obfuscation of love impinged upon me
hoping to set up my fall they don't see
the true heart of hot matter in the swill
bucket of the heart the big swill bucket
of the heart the illumination of the
tired ageless man blood frothing from his
nose and eyes in 2 four time because
of excess the bastards have me cornered
again and I dream of falling before great
hermetic cylinders and I hear trains
rolling now maybe car loads of jews
I don't care and I don't pretend to care

here you can't care you are incapable of
caring no matter what they say you are
incapable of caring about anything other than
your own unsolid green guts and so they
come with sword and shield to scare me
again the sorry bastards truth is subjective
subjectivity is the truth, and so on man, they
don't get me no more dinner plates no last
meal in this place and they don't gives no
socks either just ball and chain good one
should say good to everything a thing my
ridiculous wife could never understand

who'd ever want a wife in the first
place my downfall having a wife and
why I'm to have my neck removed

should have taken my trip to quebec
like I wanted to when master brian
wanted to get the revolution started
at least I'd a died with harness on
my back would have been much
better than this weeping of mothers
and wives what's the difference
between a mother and wife one you
tend not to fuck and one you

solemnly seldom fuck so what the
things I think about before I die
at least I know it never got any
better and yet still straight on
to the destruction of towers I say
I'll never die I don't guess good
precambrian dreams assuage me to the
end one thought contaminates another
thought from a long line of contamination
good good good until every tree in
america has a cop and shrink dangling
from every limb and what's that noise again

get tired of the same old mystic
noise that's been ringing since birth
and probably before birth and maybe
even before that who can tell and why
do all of these creatures pick me to
swarm on I hope they give me
a shot of something before the
guillotine what beautiful looking
train that just was apropos I like
the word thermopylae for no other
reason than it just has a certain
ming sound to it a certain resonance

that falls out of the throat real dead
pan like what I always wanted
and never got was a standing desk
I'll be the harbinger and go forth
to my wife and bring the joyful news
of my shrinking cock which is working

its way into me like a bullet what's
that noise again duncan stop it with
thy knocking now master brian would
say you want this up your arse-hole, the
needle I mean, I would say sometimes, no,
no, I want to go crystal hunting and

that would seem to please him greatly
ever wonder why it's evil you're attracted to
is it possible that the individual is superior
to the state or the other way around
or is it only that the individual has the
power to melt the trees outside his
death window and make the sky black
with infinite thoughts of haste I
happen to think the state is superior
to the individual now that they have
me covered and when I was two I
hallucinated a little bit and when I

was five that's when the real tremors
began good and to add to all of
this I wasn't much into emplacement
although my friends were look
at me talking of friends at this hour
before you know it I'll be praying
to god for satan's sake what's
wrong with me is this execution
really getting to me or something
thought I'd have something really
great to say with it only split my hairs
and quit my sight and keep the bloody

motion up dra. dra. dra. cum-laud-fless
so sounds the ridiculous rain now maybe
it will rust the guillotine no, no, no, if
the guillotine should rust they'll bring
out the noose good let them bring out
ten nooses for all I care I'll survive
them all caramba explosion of mute
form and glass breathless ontological
argument of the most purest meager

kind forehead wet bath intenseo
to still a word right left up down
all wet on me

and
now
your
head
will
come
completely
off

Philip Quinn: The Kiss

as ever the integrity of the bursting flower
and a pucker of butterfly stars

head turned
a balancing facular orbit

the billionth snort and hiccup smother
of contrapuntal redemption, of first light

apply suction
smack the lips

Alex Ward: Hypaethral

hypaethral,
as if of
praise.
roofless
houses, of
new orleans. a
black
rag for the
star
altars. a
black
dog, for its
shine. the
children
naked, and
poor.

(pause. breathing)

is poetry
naked? then
so are the
flowers, and
so are the
rains.
there's
never a
breaking,
only the
braid-
of deeper
binding.

(rises. gets cigarette)

in honor of
Mustafa i will
lie down and
die. i will
dress in
dapper rags
of a
heroin
junkie. my
chest is torn
open. it is
singing-
new orleans.
and the
river,
ever
brimming.
sings of
things,
that won't
die.

Forrest Roth: Entrée

Keep spoiling the mood with drawn swords and I may have to temper that enormous haircut of yours. Now try again. Convince me leafy greens thrive in the absence of peppercorns—doubtful I could guide you home afterwards. Do you know why that is? *We are not drinking enough?* Conventional. A petite toast is your just reward once I find a caravan to the nearest pince-nez. It fits not too snug in a steam bath yet recalls our schooling days together—I haven't the heart to share them over bouillabaisse. The salads here wind down sooner and sooner, the sorbet smells of overripe lemons. Could we filch a tourniquet of baguette and make a run for it? The maître d' had threatened complimenting us to death for such a maneuver. I cannot enjoy his service, it reeks of listless disdain. Tell *that* to the sloppy little valet and see him shake a laugh out! No no no, you and I are good, gentle graces salvaged between the gold-plated prongs of Madame's oyster fork, smiling along with the next passing desert cart (though shameful that we speak only in cherries jubilee). Escape does not heed necessity. Mutton, our less-than-benevolent intermediary this evening, is deigned passable despite the cured butter basting; I suspect, however, the black currants have been smuggled in by Bedouin nomads. Notice the fistfuls of raw garlic served to the next table, thus covering their fear of intruding upon our conversation—*Hello there!*—as I tell you about a certain poison, one that never betrays itself, not even becoming a taste in the mouth of its victim but adopting a guise of the sweet victual inhabited that is, of course, so appropriate. Cruel imagination! A croissant should remind me of your forehead, not the other way around. You must never be an impresario at any cost: all wallpaper loses its handle on Montparnasse. Then these orange slices will begin their water-dance in the fingerbowls when you deliberately leave them be.

Christopher Barnes: Didn't We?

Stewed towels. haute cuisine,
the town-talked Piaf.

In the opposite scale
I don't scent backstreets.

Did we rocket through see-double doors
at the Paris Metro? Imaginable.

We read Genet
where slip-waters fidget.

William Peacock: V.

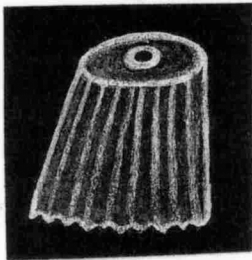
she signed the letter,

V.

could be anybody

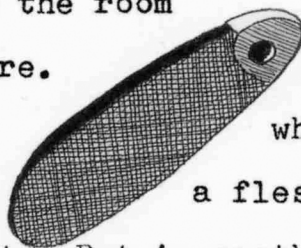
TRANSPORT

With Unhelpful I reenter an airy rooming house. Because the house is ablaze, our stay must be of limited duration. We climb a burning staircase to the second floor to enter a room. In it is my own desk. As though "fired" I am to sort through the desk drawer, selecting whatever

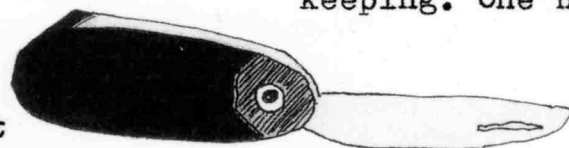


is worth keeping before the room are assigned to departure.

are rolled-up tubes of to be pimple cream,



items into a wastebasket. But in another drawer I discover several small pocket knives which seem worth keeping. One has a brightly-colored handle.



At the student desk, filling out cards, I begin to speak with the tenured professor standing near who



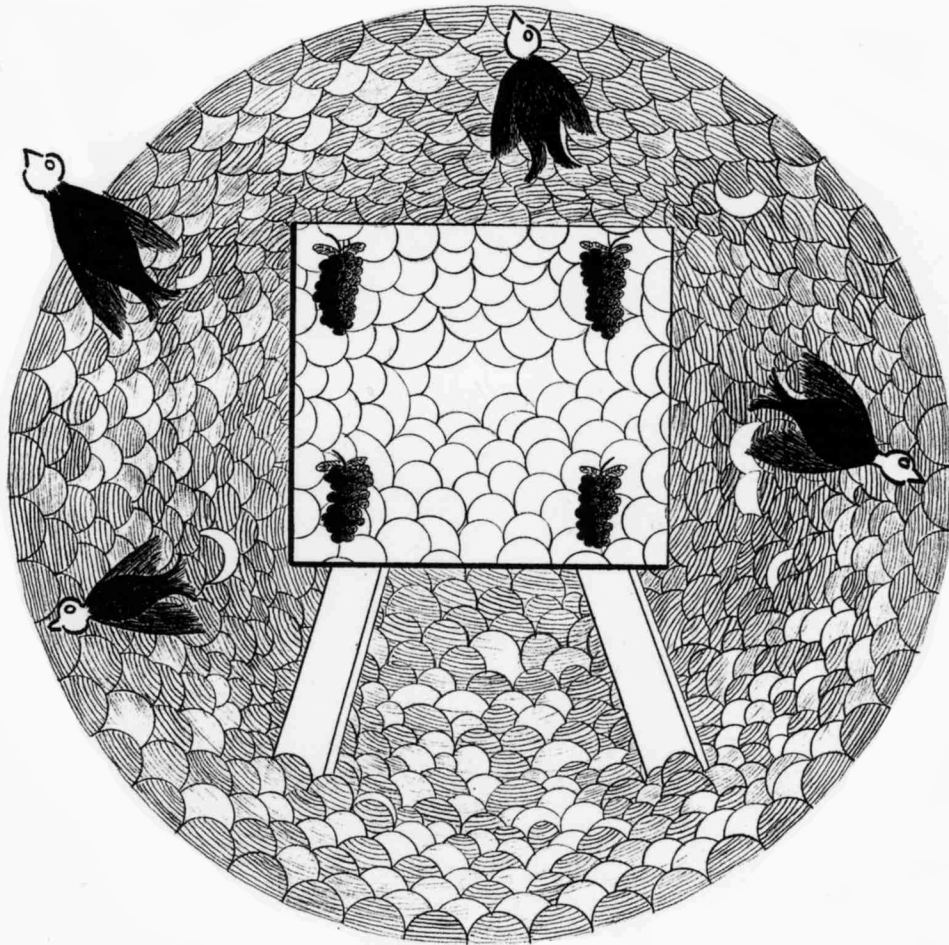
学生牌

resembles a shrink. I begin to write down English and history for my courses but he suggests I ought to consider going back4 subjects in which I have as yet displayed only a thin proficiency. I flip the jack knives at an archery target in a renewed, albeit somewhat futile, effort to please Obeys-her-Friends. (Both misses.)

Riding a bus across the border, heading for town, I converse with a prisoner beside me. We share some word with a third in the seat just in front, who had a jeweled clip. As we cross the border into town,

I remark on mesas visible through bus windows . . . Meanwhile my word stash is transfered to the seat mate. Inside the bus station we have disembarked and the vague one won't return belief.

Instead, he hands my stash to a woman. In the bus depot, she



inhabits a square, 3-sided plywood booth.

Jessica Wígent: Two Poems

Oh Magdalena J. Parenzs

No hay delfines en el Lago Michigan
Without a trampoline to symphony
Hay más delfines que momentos del amor en el mundo
Only lilies in the interstices speak the everyday out loud
Hay más delfines que cosas que viven en las grietas,
The art of go;
Que las cosas que se cogen en el espacio entre vivo y no vivo
every blunder decided by the other.
No hay delfines en el Lago Michigan
Speak the everyday out loud

you confess, clouds are clouds

a thing so simple
the oak sleeps in the acorn
the bird wants in the egg
I am almost ashamed
when light breezes blow men off horses

Bryson Newhart: Flyswat

I squatted like a peeved hunter in the awful echoing outhouse of the world. The best way to deal with one's prey is to sit back and not bother about anything. I used to have a system. I lived in a burning tower and gazed for sudden movement down below. Brandishing a toaster or a howitzer, I might suddenly become intoxicated by the prospect of attack, usually on a creature I could not identify, and which might merely be the shadow of a weed, offering up its crude smile. My system was effective. The most difficult part was morphing into action.

The tower smoked and writhed above the dust from every vantage as I imagined my prey far below, bumping its nose in the burning thicket. I spat words on the nearest dim form. "You want to take shape and stand tall. To be part of an organization. To join a group with shining teeth like a humorless dinosaur enjoying his grim breakfast."

And the creature replied, "You're beginning to put two and two together."

The suggestion of slaughter claimed a season of minutes, ticking in defiance of the sun, which itself seemed to hover between the thing and I.

"Ha!" I answered, far too late to be heard.

And then eventually, "So what you're saying is ..."

To describe the creature, I had noticed his movements from afar, eyes buzzarding in swollen sockets. All of us were wrong that year, furtive and inclined to extreme. Our milk of thoughts slowly surfaced in its skimable goodness, the rich fat held up and scraped away. I had made a weapon and constructed my tower, which is when I saw the creature, in the midst of so much rippling fur, on the horizon if you will, which in fact I had also constructed, thrown together out of steam. I needed to bring into relief the control I thought I had engendered of my limits, and low and behold, among thousands of emaciated fleas and not in the least bit random, a creature of some kind. I was nearly choked by my slavering affection.

Later as the sun turned gray, heaps of ash caught my wrist with an unshakeable conviction. Motionless and alert, I recalled the words of a misshapen animal I had seen in the dark one day, which offered timidly, "Watch out for the flies if you see them." Normally I wouldn't waste my breath on such advice, but I distinctly recall saying, "You do the same. I'll keep my swatter handy." But in all fairness, I never had a swatter that could battle the convictions of a dust storm. I was thrifty when it came to such expenditures. I cut corners with a homemade knife. I had carved the knife out of wood, although it was incapable of cutting even wood.

Actually, if you must know, one of my favorite things is plywood, which is a weapon. I use it to get my way. Take for example my plywood knife and how I used it to get my way. I employed it as a swatter in the ash fields, although really it could hardly handle ashes. I slashed the wind and saw the sky foam grey. The sun stared coldly from behind dead bushes, which made me laugh because I knew it couldn't see. It was near the end of that day, and to throw off the insects whose faint protest could be heard in the distance, miles and miles away, I walked quickly. Twilight then, and convictions rose up all around me. I might be eaten alive, for example!

As the creature once told me, there are certain small truths that grow with age in the land of soon. A man comes around without knocking and circumvents your house with spray. You can safely seal a house without memory, or with nothing but, the patter of a momentary storm, seen each day at short distance, rising in a swarm from the ash fields.

The result is insected truth. Flyswat.

Christín Call: Two Pieces

Found Líneage, Northbound 405

Loftily fingered in the grime of its flank
the pack animal of the new century
bears its South American ancestry as an unschooled child—
lapelled message secured by mother's pearl-tipped sewing pin:

Juacana
Llama
Vicuna
Alpaca

Kingly stemma formatted unfeelingly and
almost a reprimand—anonymous finger ridges
serrating the upstroke of the "V"—
that we would prefer gas fumes to natural expellations,
the automated steel frame to cheeksoft fleece.
Like a traversing Joycean degenerate—"God becomes man
becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes
featherbed mountain"—

so too the unnamed author of "Onania: The Heinous Sin of Pollution"
chides a medieval populace its morose habits.
Self-efficient, they would twist their mouths chagrined and shamed,
furiously close in the halves of their faces
pleasured and convenienced.

Pardie the Naysayers to the Carfax, Anon!

No sparsile wonder it dishumor, "Plato" liege,
who, if orating,
 tote 150 decibel megaphone,
if scripting,
 dictate jettison fume to ether plane,
if praying,
 opine to the vast and illustrious clusters
 puckering the Olympian pantheon.

Fie you, a would-be-sacricolist of unfindible Form
pitched
abreast capitals
 like a global marketing campaign.

'Twas the Greeks built impeccable temples
 and put nothing in them.
The transition would thus hie to the horsehead—
 engineers of Augustus called the new bard
 whilst Pax Romana wielded the new colonialism.

Howbeit
by you
the road-grid of Lugo,
in imitation of Roman military camp,
 seem banally specific.
As the carfax make use
to describe the division and tining
 of a Spanish town
and sorrow the churlish sea its lack,

poetry loathe abstractions the same reason most.
Perfection. Beauty. God.
Exteriors bland as clams.

David James Callan: Cautionary Napkins

A box is like a box because the outside
is to have within it

anything. Some boxes are a kind of bird
with metal wings that ate
the remnants from your plate

in extremely fine establishments like Bonanza.

Cigars, frozen crustaceans, sand and
Grandma all have boxes,

and earth is what a box is when
it cries through space,

holding animals and mountains to its skin,

as it rushes from the burly sun.

Jimmy Chen: The Unhappy Woman and the Man Who Was Not Happy

Moments in the rain, while waiting for the morning bus, she thinks of herself as a turtle. Soft pink and naked under the shell of an umbrella. It opens up, a flower blooming the wrong way. The puddle under her laps the islands of her shoes. There are no dry puddles, only places for them.

His eyes trace the indistinct moments that mark off the blocks: signposts, painted curbs, gutters, garbage bins. *Bus stops at the Bus stop.* What a concept, he thinks. Everyday she gets on. Everyday he reads the newspaper, unadmitting eyes gripping the fibers of the page, as if to look at her would be to throw himself into negative space defined by what he is not. The headlines are different, but the same. This world is fucked.

Her eyes see through the eyes of someone else, a character in a book she is reading. It seems that the 19th century was kinder, warmer because of all the gas lamps. The earth still made it between the cobblestones, before the age of cement. At least she thinks this, angling her book under her own lamp so that the pages are most yellow, a color which means brightness in the world of painting. Before she jumps in front of a train, she must find her bookmark.

Moments in his room, while waiting for a sleep that is impossible because of the erratic droplets on his window sill that would have been genius in jazz but were simply irritating, he thinks tomorrow the bus will crash and they will be together.

Abraham Smith: bears: a spiritual

1

let fly all
your happy dabbed clay curios
at each hummocky rise
that's to keep them off sing
like a steel drum cardinal
case you've slipped into
the minus sign shark face singe
tween black bear cub and black bear sow

one running at you one white hot mother
they say no tree hugging
for black bears outhug any old tree all day

say whoop and slap at
the nose like a shark attack sock the
freak out of the front and stand

mostly dough
by the road bend
in the gentle clasp of distance
in the gentile god of my car with eight
hundred million trilliums popping
over near darkness beginning
I am a sucker for silent oblong
woof and drop in tag alder snap
the little shit
would be timber they lumber
a little like fire

I keep drinking
my spit keep dreaming I am
breezing through
their musty doors
to some buttered glade
where ponies give mouth
to mouth to flowers

and a pretty ohioan or two
loom to sponge me down

2

or polar bear—only bear that stalks us
as any other prey is that
snow or bad snow?

body like new fallen snow
outbid a fuck-it-all sailor
at the estate sale
for the inventor
of the lug nut

belly and thunder in the belly of the snow

3

grandpa back scratcher
good stiff stick some brown bear claws

hawk beaks tense with mercury

hey ya'll did the pink fluid full of electric eel pierce your
personal wherewithal?

if one charges
shit fuck fire
they say run down hill
for browns run down hill poor
they may very well begin to tumble
o tumbling stumbling funny bear
very like peat bog popped graveyard sod
stuffed in a walking machine

people used to wrestle bears at county fairs
people with pig between the teeth and a penchant
for whipping the small

4

if the grandpapa grizzly
has you pinned to a lodge pole pine
if the freaking griz has your
sweet belt loops speaking french slang
to cool mountain soil
play dead
go fetal

5

the dalai lama on about
what good means
lifts his wide finger
dips it in mulberry juice dabs scribes
a berry bloody stream every eve
on your sledded way
to the tater rust scene
in the half sleep of sweet dreams
peat bog pop and peep and
linger over
your
soonish
sweetish
petering
swan

6

those who've lived
to see new light
by dint of going fetal fake pallor
where every number is prime
tell of the bear's chill nose
truffling down ribs
tell of the hot mop bear mouth skin
swabbing the spine

o if if and when
the bear forgets
you and goes

how like god
in his jelly roll dementia
less on tiptoes more tin pan grease
goes and leaves the quote unquote dead
for scab king coyote to
quote unquote wrench
and the whole place silent

I mean nothing
save minty conifer wind

distant dinosaur remnant barking fastidious crows

this unholy
compost smell
letting go
your fleece o
then there is
the benevolence of woods birdsong

quiet steady
quiet stern birdsong

mother ground
may I seem as a dough arising
in a handsome bow

don't know how yet

nor what nor how

Claudia Smith: Precious

Our grandmother took her diamond cat collar to Bingo. It was her charm, and came from Tiny, the cat we all loved. Tiny died the night our father came home from a seminar about how to make money in real estate, but the seminar was a scam and our father had too many strawberry margaritas that night. He was not equipped for the world of men, he said, and it was our grandmother's fault. Hard times have fallen upon us, he said, and when he backed up the car over Tiny's neck, we knew the hard had fallen.

After he went down to the basement, we brought him Tang powder and cheese sticks. Our grandmother fixed tomato soup with fish crackers, and kissed us on our foreheads, and sent us to bed with rhinestone crowns. You are princesses among paupers, she told us. Downstairs, our father festered. We brought him vegetables and fruit, but he refused.

He did not speak. I brought him a plate of mudcakes. He ate them, every one. I told him they were mud. He wiped the dirt from his lips. His frog's eyes were shiny, sad.

The next night, I brought him Cheeze Whiz. He opened his wet lips and drank it down. The Cheeze Whiz dripped from the sides of his mouth. He scratched his crotch. What can I bring you? I asked him. I could bring him Tiny's collar, but what if he swallowed the diamonds? Then we would have no treasure. Cat, he said. His teeth had cheese on them. His eyes wandered.

That night I told my sister, these times are too hard. She said, he's getting hungrier. Upstairs, our grandmother sang a song about angels and crows.

Anthony Opal: Adam's Park

Nothing in particular other than buildings looking like gray
boxes like paintings from the nineteen seventies green grass
looking turf chemical moss trees with leaves that move like
dirty lakes covering the sun the decades chrome painted
machines moving fast people moving along cement wet and
dark I sit in a park below a banana leaf tree this is it this is today.

Douglas Leah Meade: proem when from 'round fenwick

fenwick is
oh-so paris-kirby—
cashbar, where
the tahoe goats
have a new
kid litter with
tri-color
(black, buff and
white
run off from milford neck
where they slink within
the bay brim

Matthew Kirby: Don Ott

Have you ever met a man as sick as Don Ott? He lives in the burrow next to mine and I can smell the sickness coming off of him in the night and it gives me dreams of things rotting. My cheeks rot. I poke the drain at the bottom of my sink and the metal rots away to a leaden paste on the tip of my finger. My German shepherd, she rots. I cry. I wake up crying and with hot extremities and smelling the smell of Don Ott as if he is in the next room of my burrow or bits of him are clinging to my face.

The only ameliorating factor is Glendale's pines and so I am having Glendale bring in more pines. I have made it worth his while to do this for a week and now there are pines even in my burrow. Even in the place where I sleep there is a great bound pine that causes me to dream of whales and men shipping whale fat by canoe on top of the dreams of the rot, which still seep in just before sunrise but don't last as long as before.

The problem is that Glendale drinks which is unfortunate for his wife and daughter, but thoroughly intolerable to a man with my position in the community. If I see him with the bottle I slap it out of his hands whether it is empty or full. For his part he peers at me from his quivering jowls with his hands smelling sweetly of sap but says nothing. He says nothing, waiting for the sound of my voice and then my voice sounds and he is released. He may pick up the bottle and put it in the recycling and return to his work with the pines.

However, here comes Don Ott, and a man of my standing in the community cannot abide by a man as sick as Don Ott coming so near the entrance of his burrow. His mustache has gone sallow and the tips are breaking off so that his cheeks are covered in brittle, sallow hairs, which Don Ott brushes sadly away with powdery hands. I have only to shriek his name and Glendale is at my side, faithful and drunken and with a great bound pine balanced on the ground beside him to ward off Don Ott. But Don Ott is not easily warded off and I see him all around me in a flurry of powder and broken hair and he is insisting that he is no longer ill. And the smell of his sickness is making me dream of rot even though I am awake. And my dream is a pleasant dream of Glendale rotting into the great pine at his side and the great pine rotting into Glendale so that the two are one sweet-smelling being. And the being stands between me and Don Ott like a great, sweet-smelling barricade. And I am happy for that instant, standing at the mouth of my burrow and I call my German shepherd and she comes to me happily and panting.

Jeremy M. Davies: Ten Letters

She has you on-ship the very next morning, and you are old enough to know that something is different, that something has happened which must matter a good deal. Your mother doesn't notice your confusion. She is lively and excited.

"The twins play those games all the time," she says of you, "dressing in each other's clothes—adorable. They can read head to head on our settee, one upside-down one right side up. We could show you later on, if you'd come to our stateroom, or they could do it for you now?"

She's all too happy to speak with the old man who's contrived to come and join you in the short time since castoff. She's no longer the person you knew ashore, the hysteric who would lock herself in the broom-closet to write letters to God when she'd been contradicted. (I know one of you has a page of her latest epistle shut in a new French grammar. You found the paper in my wicker wastebasket, and a finger of the basket's straw picked at your sleeve when you stole it. It's marred by a crab-shaped ink stain, and begins *Tell me, Sir, whether I may ask you for another favor.*) Onboard the steamer she's back in her element, the urbane traveler, and you children—Willie, Nillie—are only her accessories, matching luggage. This doesn't embarrass or upset you (as it will when you're older); hearing your collective talents enumerated you can't help but grin, lopping the opposite sides of your two smiles like facing panels of a dressing mirror.

The old man, Mahaffy, who resembles our family doctor, knocked off his own hat to chase it to your mother's side; he bent down to retrieve it and then asked for her arm to help him upright: a little vaudeville, executed with confidence. He's sizing you up. He says, approvingly, "Scamps. Rascals. Scalawags and scapegraces." The ship is lousy with old men. En route for a last look at Paris. You both shake hands with Mahaffy. Above, four black and red stogies fumigate the sky. There is cheering, the foghorn, and your mother's pleasant alto as she small-talks with this stranger. The bitterness of her cigarillo (he'll have offered; she won't know how to refuse), her velvet glove-hairs whispering under your nails, your dockside sarsaparillas turning sour on your tongue.

There are also men closer my age, off to cure their shellshock with a second dose of Europe. Your mother, bless her, doesn't care for the shabby way they dress, their smooth, pale faces or lacquered hair; how they're frightened to show their wallets when they have to tip a porter. Seeing them at the guardrail, morose, getting tight, she'll think of how she used to tease that I'd gotten her pregnant just to stay out of the war. She says, "I'm

marrying my schoolyard sweetheart if you please. My boys'll have a Parisian childhood. New York and their atherfay just memories." But she has ten sealed envelopes in her purse, addressed Dearest William and Dearest Nathanael, one for each day of your trip. They took three days to write, copy, and seal. (I barely had three-days' notice.) She's keeping them safe, keeping to our agreement: one letter for each night at sea.

You kids wonder whether this schoolyard beau of hers exists, or if he's just another imaginary correspondent. Furry, overstuffed Mahaffy—a Volsteadist—is scandalized by this talk of divorce. He offers another cigarette to avoid responding as his conscience dictates. Your mother declines, more comfortable now, and says, "The best thing for them. The best thing in the world."

Mahaffy thinks of his own youth. He had just the sort of childhood your mother is imagining, *la vie de chateau*, and is now on what he reckons will be a final pilgrimage to the City of Light. You're still doing your mirror-routine, and he looks you over, wondering if the affliction he suffers—this need to roll himself, little piggy, in the smells and colors of his own French adolescence—will affect you, seventy years down the line, as irresistibly as it has him. He pictures identical octogenarians on some future ship: an ornithopter with feathered oars beating the air.

"Bravo," says he. "Continental education. In what trade did you say your former husband ah?"

And you children answer, proudly, Architect, as your mother wraps three pink fingers around the outsize beads she's strung on her wrist. She calls me a lay-about, doesn't mention the one building to my credit, though even from the ship it vibrates like a long, taut thread on the horizon. (I can also see it, out of my office window. There are lights on in one of the upper stories; other work that lasts the night.) And what possibilities an architect-father should pose! At his drawing board, drafting three-tiered underground fairy-barrows, inverted baroque palaces, with stables for ants and rats and sparrows, and courtyard guillotines that work backwards—the blades *rising* through the neck—pulled by spider-silk cables up a wedge-thin shaft by birds frightened by spears in their backsides.

And this ideal father, the one who built you cloud-castles, eclipses me, who never did, in your memories. You have an urge to spring to his defense, but a clandestine elbow-tap from Willie to Nillie ensures your remaining conspiratorially silent.

"Many's the fortune started from no legacy," says the old man, an architect's son.

"They'll be well set up," your mother answers, wondering if this is so. She imagines her fiancé collecting her at Rouen; the boys plopped into the back seat of his car with a wizened aunt or mother.

Mahaffy coughs and makes a show of patting his pockets for his cigarette lighter. It's the kind meant for use in the parlor or car, the size of a small soda siphon; he carries it for its exceptional longevity. He hides his second cigarillo of the evening in his beard, and presses both thumbs on the trigger, singeing his gray whiskers and the black brim of his topper. You fear for a moment that his thick fur coat will ignite—maybe catching your mother's wrap and the sailor's caps she's bought you—but are reassured by the presence of so much water. Fires onboard must be met, you think, with good humor and insouciance. You imagine the captain, Mahaffy's double, sitting at table in a white and black uniform, both hands on his punchbowl belly, watching your mother knock over a candlestick as she reaches for the jam; he gives a jovial chuckle and bids her to be calm as his long, smooth table burns, licking the papered ceiling. "Never mind," he says, basso profundo like his foghorn. "We'll just open a window."

But the captain is really a young, thin man of the sort your mother affects to disdain. An ex-serviceman, mustered out as lieutenant-junior, he is nervous at the beginning of this, his first voyage in command. Like his father, who got him this position, and, for that matter, the old man talking to your mother, he is a member of the Anti-Saloon League. The captain is terrified of the moment when his vessel—a Cunard liner, out of England—will enter international waters. He is convinced that the passengers will glut themselves on the store of spirituous liquors in the hold, thereby leading to an orgy of misrule for which he alone will be responsible. In his civies—against regulation during departure—he leans on the guardrail, passionately drinking quinine water. He composes a letter to his father while he waits to be discovered. *Even though, it will begin, I quake with trepidation and sickness of heart, I must write to request a release from the duties you have so graciously*

"Nothing wrong with wealth well earned," Mahaffy is saying, thinking of his inheritance, also of the money he's willed against his lawyer's wishes to an illegitimate son in San Francisco.

It's the first mate, a fifty-six year old veteran of the Spanish-American War, who is seeing the liner underway—in full company regalia, in the wheelhouse. He was discharged from the army a Major; the honorific appears on his pension checks. Some of the younger porters use it, frightened for their jobs.

When tourism was down, during the war, he had found temporary employment as a traveling "four-minute-man" for the Committee on Public Information. In the propaganda office, and earlier in Cuba, he had witnessed great things: moments of history. His regiment had once bivouacked for the night at a camp with the Rough Riders, and he himself had enjoyed a short discussion about trade unions with Roosevelt. At a CPI office to gather notes for his next round of speeches, he had been present when the decision was

made to re-christen sauerkraut “liberty cabbage.” He fantasizes about corkscrewing holes in the hull. Though it’s unlikely he could ever sink the liner by this method, he likes picturing—while he gives listless and irresponsible orders to the helmsman—his choirboy captain brought low by an implement of drink. He has drafts of the report already written, hidden in his cabin safe-box: *Never before in my years of service have I witnessed so flagrant a disregard*

“He’s a prince,” your mother says, speaking of my replacement. “An honest-injun prince.” She’s determined to humble Mahaffy. Mahaffy, to his credit, is on to her. This lady has something to prove. She’ll hound him the entire trip—each meeting an opportunity to embellish her anticipated affluence.

“He isn’t French by birth. He’s Bengali,” she adds. “He has royal blood. His family doesn’t approve of me.”

And these lies lead me into a kind of sympathy with your mother. We neither of us can be sure you’ll approve of the trips we construct for you—hers real, if hyperbolized, and mine wholly counterfeit: this attempt, too late, to build your fairy kingdom with words. How mundane it is next to the pictures I imagine you imagine I might have made to entertain you. I remember what *I* loved as a child: smut, sugar, cruelty, and Ambrose Bierce. Must I assume that you, as my sons, share these feral predilections? (It was his story *One of Twins*, itself in the epistolary mode, that first came to my mind when you were born—in which a surviving twin takes revenge on the man responsible for his brother’s death. I remember that the antagonist regards the twin with a *look of unspeakable terror, for he thought himself eye to eye with a ghost.*) I’d rather believe that your similarity protects you, that your thoughts are a system closed to the wicked world: a private language, your uterine Morse, keeping the rest of us out. But I can’t run the risk of being too tame for your tastes. Our relationship has been reduced to this: whether or not I can keep you reading.

“Tommyrot,” Mahaffy says to your mother. “Moonshine. They’re savages not to approve of a pretty thing like you.”

“His parents,” your mother replies, “did not have the benefit of a continental education.”

On the rail, the captain sniffs. There is an odor in the air that provokes a terrifying memory. His father, naked. Drinking brandy in the garden. Red genitals, upturned face. Or is he thinking of Noah? There is the unmistakable scent of alcohol underneath the bracing bay-smell.

A porter, just five years your elder, arrives now to tug impertinently at your mother’s hem. He says, “Your stateroom’s ready, ma’am.” He says, “It’s *been* ready.” But she can’t be bothered. She’s found her audience.

“Why don’t you boys go down and explore?” she suggests. “Then you can come back and show me the way, give me the nickel tour.” She doesn’t look at you. The more she talks to the old man, the more firmly she believes in her new future. She doesn’t notice the gentleman’s disappointment at your having been removed. The porter, in turn, regards you with suspicion—as though your twinness is a trick intended to secure his favor. At thirteen, he’s the youngest employee on the ship. You’re the only ones onboard over whom he can assert some kind of authority.

“C’mon,” is what he says. He jerks his thumb over his shoulder then turns on his heel. Inside into the warmth, and down the wide flight of stairs. There is a constant, tooth-tickling vibration. You smell wax and brine and burgundy wine. The porter hopscotches along the pattern of alternating red diamonds on the vestibule’s carpeting until he reaches a second descending flight; he looks back to see if you’ve followed his lead, determined to turn this little trek into a drill. You obediently hop your way to his side, in the process passing a dimly lit ballroom. Three couples and an unattached woman have begun a slow-drag two-step to the accompaniment of the motor. Empty bottles wobble at their feet. In her hand, the lone woman holds a page of creased onionskin. This is a message from her fiancé, who is still stationed in Germany, apologizing for having married a young French woman in her stead. He met the girl while in hospital for three puncture wounds in the shoulder. The letter is signed *Ever Regretful*. Having already purchased her ticket, the woman decided to take the trip regardless. It will be her first time out of the country. You and she pass in opposite directions, on either side of the open double doors.

Deeper into the ship—hallways lit with fixtured bulbs in the shape of shells—your porter spies the Major. The boy loses his swagger. For the past half hour he has been leading you in circles; has in fact led you past your stateroom five or six times, counting on the sameness of the corridors to keep you disoriented. If he were to be questioned, he would have to admit to this. But something is wrong—the Major is smiling. He’s soaking wet. Has metal shavings on his shoulders. Smells as though he’s been down in the hold. He actually pats the porter on his head as he walks by—doesn’t box his ears for slouching. This breach of protocol makes the porter uneasy. He takes you directly to your room now, closing the door behind you and locking you in with his master key. It makes him feel better.

The porter winds his way back towards the deck to assist the next party. He grew up without a father, just as you’ll have to do; not because his father was awkward or unsure around children—their little inscrutable faces—and not because the porter’s mother deprived the boy of his company, but because no one was sure who his father was. *Two weeks*, the porter will write later that evening, *and that new man of yours had better be out of the house.*

He'll send the letter back with his wages from port, to impress his mother's neighbors with the French stamp and postmark. Maybe he won't wait: the eldest of his five cabin-mates has a book of pretty stamps from all over the world. He bought it, he said, at a store with Turkish cigarettes and dirty playing cards. Some of the stamps have girls on them too—holding lamps or shields, and often with a breast exposed—but the book was cheaper. Another stamp shows a hussar on the back of a rearing roan, foam mapping the animal's grimace. The hussar brandishes a curved sword in his hand, but has turned his face to the right, looking with surprise at something beyond the perforated border of his landscape. Is it this unseen element that caused his horse to rear? The sky is red behind them, and there is a walled city visible in the middle distance. This man, the porter reckons, though perhaps not pictured at his best, would issue forceful, authoritative missives to his generals, and sign them with his seal in runny wax: *Tonight we charge when the first star shines*. He hopes his letter to his mother will have a similar tone. He knows he was lucky to get this job. He has learned to protect himself—for who else could do it?—by always being on the attack.

Trapped in the cabin, you wonder what is happening on deck. You imagine the porter coming back into the air, and Mahaffy noting the boy's broad, Cro-Magnon cranial structure. Your mother is a beauty, as you well know, but she had been characteristically narcissistic in her assumption that the old man was staging the routine with his hat in order to proposition *her*. It was you, Willie and Nillie—you're suddenly quite sure—that caught his interest. Mahaffy, that other architect's son, was once a doctor. Not a medical doctor, you tell one another, but a seller of patent medicines by mail. Gullible women—like your mother—would write him and beg him to cure their children of monstrous deformities or fatal illnesses. And he would respond, unfailingly, that *Even my poor heart, Madam, hardened like Pharaoh's before the libels of Moses by the witness of so much human suffering, could not help but be moved by your words of gracious Mother's Love and Concern*. Probably he has long been on the run from the Health Department, and carries a large bounty on his head. Unknown to the authorities, as you warm to your story, he is also responsible for the deaths of twenty-five children of both sexes, ranging in age from five to fourteen. These were not due to his inaccurate diagnoses (though he had once, by virtue of his ignorance, you giggle, depopulated an entire family farm in darkest New Hampshire) but to an avocation he had acquired only peripheral to his stated profession. The old man, having no aptitude for modern medicine, had become fascinated with obsolete, often arcane procedures. His favorite of these to perform, inspired perhaps by the *Tutankhamen Rag* you're so fond of, was the removal of the brain through the nasal cavity with long, curved hooks. Your identical physiognomies, it's only natural, and the grace of your synchronized movements, were enthralling to

him. The hooks, and other items from his collection—some made-to-order, others honest-injun antiques—are in the false center of his large burgundy portmanteau. He wants time alone with you both, to examine your skulls; perhaps to see how the one's organs differ, if at all, from the other's. Afterwards he could preserve what he had removed in small, prepared metal amphorae; or, if he wanted to be true to his ancient predecessors, discard them.

Each time he performs the procedure, or the score of others he's mastered (as he never could the simple suture, the subcutaneous injection), you decide he is troubled by this very decision: How true to his forebears should he remain? He's felt the occasional twinge of guilt, appropriating those wonderful, ancient, misguided rites for his own gratification—and on those occasions would do everything in his power to execute them accurately. Other times, however, he's told himself that it didn't matter—was it not their very irrationality that made the procedures so captivating? Why not improve or simplify them, then, when time or hygiene became issues? In this your Mahaffy is similar to the composers of the *Tutankhamen Rag* that had encouraged him (or, for that matter, the *Shakespearean*, *San Juan*, *Halley's*, or *Hophead*): clothing venal preference with history. The comparison would never occur to Mahaffy, however—nor to you. This Mahaffy feels that he's been establishing a legitimate connection to his heritage: the continuing saga of quackdom; while you, Willie and Nillie, pass the time telling macabre stories about old men who kill children. Your mother on deck puts the finishing touches on her fantastic luck. And I, in my office, am suddenly ashamed of my arrogance. I don't know a thing about any of you. I don't know a thing about the world. And yet there is no way for the world to correct me. And if you, any of you, were here, I wouldn't be interested in a single thing you had to say.

Mahaffy is distracted now by a splash and cries of man overboard. In your cabin you see the captain pass the porthole. Standing on chairs to look down at the waterline you watch him thumped against the hull. Certain his head was crumbled by the fall, he feels salt swish around his skull—seeing water and swallowing it. Stubborn, he surfaces, and at my desk I wonder whether your mother will keep her promise after all and give you my letters. In the street, later tonight, at the feet of four or five high-rises—and mine a few blocks down and over—I'll note for the millionth time that it's impossible to tell that I'm walking on an island, that a few miles away the buildings turn into ships. Later still, Mahaffy will be embarrassed to hear the ship's doctor diagnose the captain with cinchonism—known to cause dizziness and a ringing in the ears, brought on by an excess of quinine. (*Request first mate take command*, a telegraph to the head office will read, *but unable to locate*.) Embarrassed, that is, because he himself would have guessed melancholia. The

vapors. Or else delirium tremens. He promises himself that he will offer the poor fellow some of his patented (if, strictly speaking, illegal) magnetic antibilious tablets. Did you, looking out through the double-paned glass, hope that the captain would drown?

Two stars are visible in the sky, ringed round with knotted cloud. Your mother has stopped speaking. Inspiration fails her. She wonders where you are. It's time to open my first letter. She worries for a moment what I might have written about her. Maybe someone will fish it oily and dripping from the bay behind her. Maybe they'll take it seriously.

Your Loving Father,

Anne Heide: Four Poems

Eighth Year

The way you walk makes my legs cold. Could you please now sit down.

Another dent in the house
horse-kicked
all wrapped in paint
Eva is all wrapped in paint.

watch her take off her shoes lie down
with her mother ask her please fix that hole
in the wall "But you made it"

watch the repair mule legged
she goes to the church

barefooted to kick it, too. Scar it so. And
break her heel.

with "I am afraid there is nothing left to ~~touch~~, damage there"

The second hand
skirt too large and pulled
up around her midsection
the contagious hoof
and foot, where one stops
the other will chase
 the dust that finally held

she only grows into corridors, core of the house

nothing in the house is painted pale
knowing nothing would be left
to stand against it.

& Evers
who can only be ill
for one day at a time

And response: "I will miss you when I'm waiting. Get yourself here soon in my bedroom"

Thirteenth Year

as though—she were stuck in a tree—the angriest of bulls have left—inside of this—another exchange—out of the stomach—fierce, this—another—when she meets his clinging back—fortune—the damage—old story—will expire this time—we are not—so brutal—look—where we have been—digging cleanly—replacing the dirt with soap.

This is an intermission. Coming almost at the end. In the life of Eva, here, everyone is still living and no one has been born.

“You are my dwelling and I will build you” “Sky burns the same way as timber”

Twentieth Year

It rained tonight and the house
fell down. Evers was waiting
for this and the house undone.

It was difficult, then, when Evers wanted to start again building.
This was difficult, then, when the house started raining.
This was all in the blueprints anyway:

Everyone ends
at the door
where
they leave their
shoes muddy
anyone could
have built Eva but
I have watered Eva
so completely so
logged with wet
weight she cannot move.

It fell tonight, her body, down. When Evers smoothed her over.

Eva fell down tonight in her house and then the rain began Evers dressed Eva
and set her upright with attention. They were both lost in the downpour
when the lake came up from the edge and up to the house

and Eva sinking upwards tonight and
couldn't set anything on fire.

The lake came washing and brought
trout trapped in algae. Stuck against
her windows.

How do you think I've survived this long, the rain comes down to meet me.

How do you think this black water looks in the daylight and can we ever get it
out of the house.

Thirty-third Year

She asks, *call me by name*
to Ever, he cannot
say anything. a result of
numb jaws he visited the
dentist earlier in the day
had one tooth pulled
and wore it on a string. Eva
wanted to make this into a
tradition. she made a game
of wearing it on different
parts (wrist, neck) until
it turned brittle *call me*
by name fell off the string
and was lost in the park
she looked for it until the
streetlights went on went
home to get a flashlight
out of batteries.

These are yours this flashlight
is dreadful (because it
shows no spark)

Eva reminded
herself to buy new ones
in the morning but by that
point had forgotten
the names of her son.

This is everything
we have made you must agree
to never break it.

Aaron Hellem: With Beets between Them

They threatened to burn down the house, and he responded with valor. Said, Go ahead then, it doesn't matter to us.

But it did matter to her, and he saw that in the way she glanced about terrified at the remodeled living room, at the wainscoting in the kitchen. The polished hardwood floors. They were once hidden in worn Berber, and one day she started picking at it, picking at one of the corners. She started to unravel it a thread at a time, separating them with a razor blade she hid inside her mouth, flat flush against the inside her cheek so he wouldn't catch on to what she was doing, wouldn't make her stop and give up her dreams of feeling the bottoms of her naked feet against cold wood.

She had to explain the carpet, the razorblade and why she kept it hidden inside her mouth flat flush against the inside of her cheek. Did she sleep like that at night, the razorblade tucked inside her mouth like that? What about when they kissed?

She extracted the razorblade and laid it on the table. She didn't wait for his understanding. She added salt to her beets and ate the beets, stopping every bite to add more salt, remarked that the beets had been picked too late and their flavor was bland as cork.

Keep adding salt then, dear, he said. What did she know? She never picked a beet in her life. You wouldn't know a ripe beet, he said.

She cringed because he had never acted bravely before, and the first time he decided to do so was to sacrifice the entire newly remodeled house. She'd just fixed it up to the point where it no longer made her want to poison herself.

They had the house surrounded. Had already trampled the lawn and the rose bushes. Were standing all over and around her hollyhocks. Had chopped down her award-winning foxgloves with state-issued machetes. They were chopping up the oak tree for fodder to stack up against the sides of the house and light them on fire.

If she had ever been unfaithful to him, if she had ever entertained any ideas of infidelity, it was time to come clean, to air out her underpants, so to say, admit the truth to him so he could put an end to it. He waited for her to come clean. He tried the beets. They needed salt. Had been picked too late. They tasted like soggy cardboard. He didn't want to reach for the salt though and admit defeat, admit that she was right about the beets despite her unfamiliarity with actual farming. Sure, she knew her way around wildflowers, but they practically grew themselves. Vegetables were completely different. You had to prepare the soil, know how what you were

putting into it influenced the pH balance. She didn't know tomatoes and lettuce, for instance, had different needs, were planted in different places in the garden.

She could see he needed the salt, but didn't want to ask for it. She would make him ask for it. The truth was she had thought about another man from whom she received postcards in the mail, poetry written on scrolls, rolled up, shoved inside bottles. They were bottles she didn't recognize, had never seen before, bottles from foreign countries. She thought about her mysterious poet whenever she was by herself, would purposely allow herself to get stuck in rush hour traffic for the time alone, enough time to imagine them on a Virgin Island together, his strong thick hands working sun tan lotion into her shoulders. Working his hands down her back. The car horns were the sounds of seagulls and passing boats. Her Volvo was a catamaran. The freeway an open ocean. I have never seen your face, but I have fallen in love with your words, she'd said, many times while in the middle of traffic, stuck somewhere along I-5.

They warned in a language neither of them understood. Do your worst, he shouted at them.

The worst, she knew, meant the wainscoting, the breakfast nook, the bay windows, the hardwood floors. She'd done them herself, little by little over the years. She'd kept the razorblade in her mouth for seven years and he never knew.

Why are you choosing this moment to act valorously? she asked. Why don't you just go ahead and ask me to pass you the salt to save your insipid beets? You know you need the salt to make those things edible. Just ask me to pass you the salt.

He'd been brave once before, but she didn't remember and it wasn't something he could talk about to remind her of it; true bravery, like true valor, had to be recognized by someone else, was talked about amongst other people.

Just when I get the house shaped up to my satisfaction, she said.

This wouldn't have happened had you kept the checkbook balanced, he told her.

You and your pin-up calendar, she said.

You and your soda bottle poet, he said.

I know when you masturbate at night, she said.

I know why you seek out traffic, he said.

Simply ask me to pass the salt, she said.

I was valorous once, he thought. He ate his bland beets without any salt. Ate the entire bowl of beets, each tasteless bite gummed without any delight.

They smelled the gasoline. The burning wood. No more warnings were shouted. All those years spent with a razorblade in her mouth. All those years waiting until she fell asleep.

There they were, at the door, at the windows, in the rhododendrons. They heard the buzz of the chainsaw. The crackle of flames licking at the clapboards.

Jeffrey Morgan: Two Pieces

Receiving

We put our heads together and made a monster.
This is not an other story.

We are the villagers when the villagers are
waving our fire.

Nostalgia

Never ever fish your fingers into the garbage
disposal, no matter how sweetly
it sings for your supper.

The tiny god in there, he is the deity of lawnmowers
and helicopters. Anything that spins sharp
is his dominion.

Chainsaws, boat motors, sunflowers, youth. He is more
powerful and less sober than his reputation
which precedes him like cut fruit.

You are him, he is you. You are him doing his “you” impression.
He is not so much vengeful or arbitrary or mysterious
as he is half in the bag.

There’s a reason we say attention is something you pay.
We don’t say: dissection is the better
part of clamor.

We don’t say: you scream, I scream,
we all scream for
nice dreams.

P. H. Madore: Invitation To A Cookout

In the chaos and space between sanity and doggerel combined with atmospheric pressure, many eons outside the standard creation, there was born a monstrosity of madness which could only be attributed to the open plains of distant, uninhabited, uninhibited planets. The bastard of no solid womb, to speak safely, was cursed and so rambles from even before the time it awakens until the time that it lays to sleep again—incessant nonsense, words which lack the fine thread which generally strings conversations together and wraps up meetings of the minds—the sinewy tinsel spun of stardust and the smell of burning hair at midnight on a quarter-moon by a gargantuan spider of no explanation, of no report.

I first encountered this being after opening and sipping a beer with her husband, and I knew her history at the sight of her; it just all rushed into my brain, and in their bathroom I frantically marked the contents of this important document on the side of my leg with a razor, then a pen. What came out was black and red—the colors of misery—but I managed to cover it and get back to the roar of the beast and back to the indulgence of her vast and blast-feast.

Elizabeth Alexander: Transmissions

1.



Adept to initiate

“We went to New York to hear Toscanini, and I ran to the stage and looked into the fierce coals of his eyes. Those were the eyes that looked into the eyes of Verdi. I’ll never forget that.”

“I” is the composer Marvin David Levy, best-known for his opera *Mourning Becomes Electra*. When I saw the opera in Seattle, it was, as usual, raining—weather well suited to most opera, perfect for this one.

Mourning Becomes Electra treats adultery, incest, and murder. It features four ghosts, two returning Union soldiers, one superficial head wound, one omniscient servant, and no dog.

There were hugs and kisses (chaste and not quite) at the curtain calls.

There were three little girls in taffeta presenting roses. Many roses.

More and more roses.

Additional roses were tossed or hurled onto the stage from the first and second balconies, orchestra pit, coatroom, catwalk, and—in an extraordinary throw—underground parking lot.

Hundreds of roses bowed, at mid-stem, to the performers. Then they took flight: Out of the opera house and into the jet stream. Over the polar cap to Italy where they landed softly, fragrantly on Toscanini’s grave.

.....

Or the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who caught Franz Boas (father of American anthropology) when Boas toppled backward in his chair and died.

Or the boxer Jack O'Brien who, as A. J. Liebling tells it, “had been hit by the great Bob Fitzsimmons . . . who had been hit by Corbett, Corbett by John L. Sullivan, he by Paddy Ryan . . . and Ryan by Joe Goss, his predecessor, who as a young man had felt the fist of the great Jem Mace.”

2.



*Artist to reader, viewer,
or listener*

This kind of transmission is more elusive—indirect. Which is not to minimize its significance.

“You write your letters to the dead. You say, Come back, come back. But they cannot. You say over and over and over again, as if they can, Come back, come back, come back, but they cannot.”

The stark and childlike words, the run together sentences and repetition intensify the summons in the direct address. And you become the “You” in Rebecca Brown’s story. You skip that step whereon the reader suspends disbelief. You assume the fictive identity, without a thought at all.

.....

Or standing before the painting *Concord*, by Barnett Newman. The numinous twin rods (two brown-gold stems) engulfed by swirling, dilute greens pass almost undetected through your mind, pervading your psyche so subtly that you do not so much *see* the painting as receive it.

And, if you’re lucky, you *become* the xylem in the brown-gold stems. You sense the water. More and more water. Endless water. Coursing upward.

Barnett and Annalee Newman spent their honeymoon in Concord, Massachusetts, just south of Walden Pond, where Thoreau received *his* transmissions from sparrows, hickories . . . beans.

Scruffy, cantankerous Henry. Devotee of quiet and solitude.
Suspended in the lapse of time. That fertile void.

3.



*Person overflowing with
love/hatred/power, etc.
to person—or people—hungry to
receive it*

“Whoever heard Der Führer at
Nürnberg make his speech felt the same
thing: there spoke in him the revelation
of a Higher One.”

Hitler addressed the rally in the
evening, after dark. The beams of 150
antiaircraft searchlights converged in a
central point over his head. He stood in
a dome of light.

“The effect was indescribably beautiful,” said *The New York Times*.

Hitler opened quietly. (The atmosphere was charged, the ardor
palpable.) He raised his pitch at the first storm of applause.

He gesticulated wildly. He clenched his fists, held them in front of his
face and brought them down hard. He jabbed the air and screamed.

Hitler believed what he said.

He made you feel as though he was saying it exclusively, confidentially
to you.

.....

My husband’s father grew up in Nürnberg. *His* father was pulled off a
train on Kristallnacht, imprisoned in Dachau and sprung out by a powerful
friend, an English lord.

In every family history: victims and victimizers. Occasionally both at
once. More often each in time. We shudder at the reverberations of their
transmissions.

Mercifully, the historical narrative contains alternatives—not so much
in the main action as in the subplots, on the fringes.

.....

The poet Robert Desnos joined the Resistance immediately after
France’s surrender. He was arrested and deported in February 1944—first to
Compiègne, then Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Floha, and Terezin.

A survivor of Buchenwald remembers Denos moving up and down the rows of people condemned to the gas chamber. Reading their palms. Predicting long and happy lives.

Denos died in Terezin, a few days after the camp was liberated. His transmission wafts on the smoke of hell, toward us:



“Let my voice come to you
Warm, joyful, and determined . . .
On the threshold of the new day we wish you
good morning.”

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Arlene Ang: fortitude: a reportage

i.

the first sister unfastens the road from her shoulders. something—perhaps jism, perhaps a fish scale runs through the nylon stockings. she strikes a match.

ii.

we are in the complete stencil of a room. the furniture breathes botulism. she is humming now. the abscess in her mouth leaks a harmonica solo.

iii.

what is grief, if not the second sister? we find a form bent over the dishes, grinding sheep bones. nothing in this place is wasted or kept alive for long.

iv.

a shard of moon lacerates the window. we are now inside her, chopping potatoes over a pot of soup. the heat steams open our eyes like love letters.

v.

the third sister is vigilance. at night, the house creaks mimic children. there's one drinking milk from a light bulb and another growing mice down its back.

vi.

in the ritual of finding strength in numbers, we scrape wax off the stairs. later, we grasp at the balustrade and find our hands floating in the rain.

Michael Kimball: Two Pieces *from* "Dear Everybody"

Dear Annie Duke,

I know that you still had another year of high school and that I was the college guy back home for the summer. I know that that probably made me seem smarter and cooler and better looking than I really was. What I'm trying to say is that I'm sorry that I took your virginity away from you. I know that it must have meant a lot to you and that it was never going to mean that much to me. Anyway, I would give it back to you now if I could.

Dear Mom,

Thank you for teaching me how to tie my shoes into double knots so that my shoelaces would stop coming untied so much and so that I would stop tripping over them and falling down and skinning my hands up and tearing holes in the knees of my pants and skinning my knees up too. And thank you for putting the pink medicine on my hands and my knees and then also for putting the Band-Aids on them. And thank you for sewing all of those patches over the holes in the knees of my pants. It was 1971 and those patches that you sewed on my clothes made me look so cool.

Harold Bowes: Coming and Going

On the way here the day before
the sunset reflected in the side view mirror,

inside its rounded casing,
like the pink interior of a beautiful black shell.

Returning today, the cloud cover extends from horizon to horizon,
the setting sun illuminating the clouds:

all of the undulations,
the soft rounded shapes within the clouds, are visible.

Emily Carr: Two Poems

billion dollar Hurricane

This was the year after
Grady Norton was killed.

Six years before Tiro I.

No one considered the sulfur
raining down on Sodom.
Everyone agreed

Babel was just another
cave.

At some point, New England
would crown

Miss America. Several
months before,

in California, her father
passed away.

In the Carolinas the sky
was thickening

three days straight. That
was before Diane

made her purchase,
scattering lives

like empty letters on a
page:

plastic flowers, a wedding
gown

& a white horse; a
carton of deer hides,

case of eggs & box of
Christmas

ornaments; a Tiffany lamp,
a drive-in theatre

& a phonograph playing
“Stormy Weather;”

the spire, vane &
gilded ball

of the Methodist church; a
herd of cattle, looking

like gigantic birds, &
seven naked chickens;

freshwater mussels, small,
unripe

peaches & a half dozen
frozen ducks;

ten ties attached to a
necktie rack, a flour sack

& a four-page letter
“in which he promises

all;” a baker’s dozen
toads, silk cemetery

flowers & three
cancelled checks.

Three Perspectives by: our lady m*oya

I

fatherless,
the mother's heart
for the "future
of her people",
Mo (silent)

You

"improved invisibility,"
smiling hugely
despite gift
of second sight,

We

<>

(only one functional
eye is characteristic
of supernatural beings
who see beyond
opposites)

Thad Fowler: Slideshow

click

Rather than humans, we are other beings with another consciousness zapped artificially into our current human state. The idea is to gain the kind wisdom only these kooky brains of ours can produce. Come death, we'll return to our actual state, outfitted with the new insight. We may speculate as to what that golden knowledge is, but a differential equation—the conduit between the one state and the other—will be the filter, and there's no guarantee it's designed to let through the nectar of joy, suffering, and wonder we may imagine it would.

click

Loved ones are those with whom you share life's precariousness, while hated ones are those with whom you share your rock solid fist.

click

To reproduce success, we have sex.

click

Watering myself I grow into: a jungle gym master ripping across handlebars while juggling; a visitor to another time shocking people with a spatula and a pair of tongs; a parking meter that's never in violation; an eerie pulse feeling its way up the back of your neck; a screw through an unthreaded steel hole; a hand up a shirt finding tissue in the bra; a treatment of treats, or tricks; a collusion colliding with a feeble fellow; an understatesman; a blade running across ice, a blade of grass, a blade; myself.

click

The first time I fought a bull it was actually a cow. A saber-horned, rippling beast of a cow. I was staying at Pancho's ranch, near Juez, and he was testing the cow, along with others, for fierceness. If fierce enough it got to romp with a bull and make babies. If not it got made into hamburger. Once finished, rattled and relieved, I noticed shit on my sole. I scratched at the shit with a stick but couldn't tell if it was the cow's, a bull's, or my own.

click

From the balcony of the king's palace, I rejoiced at the Void, the only light coming from seven white roses. They mingled slowly about one another, never touching, expanding and contracting as if breathing. Beneath them, the baker's daughter appeared. She floated in her apron and waved me toward her. "It's clear today," she said, "and your dreams have been shown their shadow." Warmth swelled. I wondered if this was the tragedy I had always sensed over the horizon.

click

When life becomes drenched in itself, I thank my lucky stars that I was born in the age of the blow-dryer.

click

If one were all powerful and all knowing then nothing would happen. One would already know the result of anything s/he may consider doing, so there would be no interest in considering it in the first place. If s/he never even *considered* doing anything, then how *could* s/he do anything?

click

A Pop Tart exploded. I made a guy look silly in front of the girl he was hitting on and he invited me to a party, promising me a special hat. I lurched violently out of sleep, spilt a glass of water on my computer and the printer blinked at me.

click

Wind is my least favorite weathrical feature.

click

I mooned the firing squad today. The commander, hand in the air, ready to give the order, burst out laughing. "Okay, Okay. That's a good one. You can go now."

click

As I sat in the cubicle preparing a client's tax file, my hand withered before my eyes into fleshless skin, dry and flaky like a snake's shedding. I reached with the other hand for my mug and took a sip of coffee, but the taste of soy milk, which I hate, filled my mouth. That was two strikes against the day. When the file I had been working on switched to Edwardian Script ITC without me touching the keyboard, I reached my limit. I inflated a camping mattress, took a balding teddy out of the drawer, and snuggled under the blanket my great-grandmother knitted for me when I was a newborn.

click

Damn those equestrians, from Equester.

click

I used to be afraid of those things. Now I just want to meet the dead.

Ray Succre: Fence-Side

They held up their agate drinks and took chills in hurdle sips—
each bathed the next, making gulps in afternoon,
and they soon dipped, stepping their scrawny legs down into the pool.

Near these backyarder folk in dripping shorts, carpetweed.
Near these July swimmers, other life pressed against the fence,
life that in pollinate levers was stropping with oxtongue,
life that ate hard and then parched in the day's Sun rind.

The hours pass and Sun drums back, marauding behind the hills,
so their mood is also behind the hills, and they dry themselves
and are dry again from drink, entering a house that certain life has
made tall, and away from the certain life that builds their agitation
with swatted flies near the sovereign, slim-curbed pool.

Cooper Renner: The Making

When I came to, I lay in a dark room near an open window. A single curtain fluttered when the wind gusted; otherwise it was still and a little hot. The memory of the wolf lunging at my neck flashed into my mind, and I reached automatically for my throat. What felt like gauze was under my fingers, slightly moist. There was no pain to speak of.

"Don't pick at it," Frank whispered. When I rolled my head to the left, I saw his indefinite shape a few feet away.

I wanted to ask, "Where are we? What did you do to me?" but my words came out a whine.

He leaned forward and petted my hair. *Petted*. There was nothing sexual in the movement. Animal fondness? "It's too soon to give you anything to drink," he murmured. "But don't worry. It doesn't take long. Look." He motioned toward the window where the moon was breaking free of the clouds. In the sharp white light I saw the top of one of the standing stones – whether Mnajdra or Hagar Qim or yet another site I had not visited, I did not know. I knew that most of the stones were lower, lying horizontally or simply not as tall, but I could not remember any houses near the desolate locations of the old temples. I remembered sitting on a warm boulder on the hillside north of the slope, sharing a lunch with a younger woman from Greece who had ridden out from Valletta on the same bus. Her Spanish was better than her English – or than my non-existent Greek – so we conversed in a language foreign to both of us, foreign to this locale, and millennia in the future when these stones were being laid. In the clear light of day, with the almost unimaginably rich blue of the Mediterranean beyond and below us, the temples felt no different from the reconstructed bones of a dinosaur in a natural history museum, the same sandy color, the same ravages of time, the same sense of a long-since-withdrawn mystery in the world where virtually nothing larger than the atomic seemed to promise the return of mystery to the world.

At this hour that one stone which I could see did not hold the warmth of any stone under sunlight; it gave off instead a glow like that of human flesh, a ruddy tone to it, like the slightest flush of pleasure beneath an olive complexion.

I heard Frank stir behind me; his back snapped as he stretched and cracked it. He sighed, then – judging from the sound – dusted his palms against his knees. "Do you remember going through puberty?" he asked. "Don't worry – I know you can't answer yet. That's one of the differences for us. You matured slowly, as a human boy does, going through changes so

incremental as to be almost undetectable. For us, it's almost instantaneous. We are children, *children*, not even necessarily leaning toward pubescence, and then we are fertile. When we wake from the making, we have body hair, developed genitals, the beginnings of a beard. We always make, in the last few decades, in the summer when we are out of school, so the suddenness of the change isn't so apparent to our teachers and friends. Usually we go on a trip, even if it's just to visit an aunt or uncle on Gozo, so that we don't stumble one day in the plaza across a friend we just saw the day before, another boy who would certainly notice the furring of the chin or lip."

Like the story I just read. The grandfather pursuing the fleeing boy. Why had he fled? Had Frank fled?

"All right," Frank went on. "Why don't you sit up now and take a sip of water?" He put one arm behind my shoulders and helped me up. I did not feel weak exactly, but rather languid, a word I had not imagined I would ever use in a paragraph; not incapable of sitting on my own, but simply with no real desire to. No ability to see the need to.

"Hey-up," he said, laughing, his fingers tensing into my right shoulder. "You still have a spine, you know?" He handed me a handle-less cup. "Go on now. Drink it."

It burst into my mouth, almost like antiseptic, but went as smoothly as mint down my throat. As I swallowed, I felt my Adam's apple push against the gauze taped to my neck. I patted it again, surprised that it was no longer damp to the touch. I began to prize it up but Frank stopped me.

"A while longer with that," he said. "You'll find the wound feels quite cold in the air if you take the bandage off." He took the cup from me. "Yes, it's a wound, though it won't be much longer. By dawn you won't look any different than you did at dawn today." He leaned forward and pulled off the sheet I had not realized I lay beneath. "It's time for a little ride," he said. "And a bit of campfire, and a dip in the pool. You won't be as good as new, Cooper. You'll be better."

*

We passed down a short hall, then entered a middling-sized room full of tables and chairs: the public cantina that served tourists to the temples. It was silent now, to be sure, the chairs flipped upside-down on the tables and the floor smooth with unswept dust. The moonlight angled across the floor, throwing a geometrical arrangement of shadow from the window frames that reminded me of Modernist art. Frank keyed open the door – is there anywhere he can't get into? I wondered – and held it for me, locking it behind us. At the foot of the steps from the deck, a scooter was parked.

I found I could talk, if huskily. "Is this how we got here?"

"Believe it or not." He handed me a helmet and strapped another to his own head.

"How did I hold onto you?" I cocked one leg over the back of the elongated seat and settled against the low metal tubing at its rear.

"You were never actually unconscious, in the ordinary sense. If you had been, I couldn't have gotten you out of the embassy."

"How *did* you get me out of the embassy?"

He kicked down on the pedal, and the scooter's small engine purred into life. It probably could not be heard more than fifty yards away. Even if it could, it would likely just blend with the roar of the surf. "With a little help from me, you climbed. Later you might remember."

Frank carefully steered the scooter up the curves of the park road toward 117 which paralleled the coast, without always being in sight of it, before turning east toward Zurrieq. Frank, however, slowed and steered off the road, not far from the curve. On the other side of the road was a small covered bus stop; on this side, what looked like an electrical substation of some sort and the sharp grade down to the cafes and docks. It was only yesterday afternoon, probably not twelve hours ago, that Frank and I had sat with his father and Paolo, being threatened. Now I was, wasn't I?, one of them. Had Frank done this for protection, as he claimed? But if Frank wasn't safe from his own father, if Victor had not been safe from his old colleague in the resistance, how could lycanthropy make me any safer? I do not know what I might have done had I not been in such a daze; had the moonlight not given such an unearthly sheen to the world that I implicitly accepted the idea that I had just been made a werewolf: had I not just this moment realized that I had been walking without crutches at the cantina, that I had easily swung my right leg over the passenger seat of the scooter to mount it, that I easily did the reverse now, getting off. Frank pulled open the door to the outbuilding, coughing in a burst of dust the wind caught up. He wheeled the scooter inside, then came back out with a coil of rope in one hand. "Probably won't need this," he said. "I'm going to guess that your agility is already up to speed. But just in case – " He drew one end around his waist and handed the other to me. I watched him tie his end through a couple of belt loops before snugging it tight. He looked up at me, the rope in one hand. "Go on."

"My cast – " My right foot felt odd to me on the hillside, without gravity, as my weight leaned downslope onto my left. "It doesn't hurt at all."

"Not after the change. I mean, you can be hurt, just as a man – or a wolf – can. But going through the change – well, it changes things. It's not that it heals you, actually. It simply makes what you were a new thing."

"So I can see better in the dark?"

"Yes. You pick up more ambient light. You also see more sharply, though you may not have noticed that yet. Come on. Snag up that rope. The path is fairly steep, but I think you'll find yourself rather more nimble, even without trying to be. Even on that ankle that was broken a couple of hours

back." He laughed. "You should have seen the look on your face after I changed."

I was, for a moment, angry; then this wee hours languor, this unreality, reasserted itself. It felt natural not to be upset, not to want to wrap my hands around his throat and choke down his explanation. "I don't remember."

He shrugged. "You may not. Changing a fully mature adult is not the norm, as I said back at the park. I'm not sure what all the differences might be for you."

One part of me sensed, with Frank, that this rope was utterly unnecessary. Another part – my daylight self – thought I had rather not go tumbling down the cliffside into the waters near the Grotto. I had seen those rocky outcroppings from below. I threaded my belt loops, then made a double knot over the snap at my navel.

"You were a scout," Frank said.

I glanced up, nodding.

His smile was both ironic and genuinely happy. "I fairly well enjoyed being a cub in a den." He wiggled his ears.

His joke made me wonder something else – why we had not assumed wolf form for this descent to wherever we were going, if the wolf was surer on his feet. But I had no doubt Frank knew what he was about.

"You'll lead," he said.

"But I don't know – "

"Relax. You'll easily see the path. And if you *should* take a spill, better I should be behind you to break your fall with the rope than knocked off my feet with you. Relax. You're living in a new world now."

I shrugged, took him at his word and began descending. My shoes slipped occasionally in the dust and loose pebbles caught by rough patches in the rock, but I never felt that I was losing my balance or in danger of tumbling. The new sense of stability was almost like the difference between driving a car, with its four cornered wheels, and riding a bike. Or – it came to me suddenly – like still resting securely on three feet, even if the fourth slid. It was almost like a shadow counterweight below my hips, like a set of training wheels I could not catch a glimpse of. And there was no doubt now that I was seeing much more clearly – the muted shadows cast by the moonlight seemed as sharp as those of the sun, though not as garishly bright. I recalled those irritating shade-and-tone-based tests for color blindness, the ones in which a person with 'normal' sight will point out vibrant numbers formed by an arrangement of dots. I could rarely see those numbers jumping out at me, resolving themselves easily, though the individual dots composing them were apparent, if somehow tamped down. "A color deficiency," the ophthalmologist had told me. By moonlight now – and I remembered

suddenly that dogs see only shades of gray – I could not distinguish colors, but the tonal shifts were incredible: the smallest variations in weathering or aging, textural differences no greater than those on a nail file. And the sky was neither blue nor black, but rather a shifting sense of depth and shallows, like the water below; not color but distance, or the presence or absence of airborne particulates, like sheer gauze in more or fewer layers.

"You see that boulder to your right? Where the path curves?" Frank's voice was pitched low, but I had no problem distinguishing it above the roar of the surf.

I nodded, then stopped and turned back to stare up at him.

"There's a waist-high wall just beyond it. With a warning sign. That's our entrance."

"What do you mean?" Entrance to what?

"You'll see. Just go on."

I shrugged and continued my way down, distracted by this grayscale world I had never seen before, enchanted by the way in which the crash of one wave differed from those before and after it, like notes which fashioned – not a kind of Aeolian music, limited like wind chimes by the length of the tubing – but rather a restless sense of something eternally unfinished, casual occasional harmonies, but more often an unending sequence of unpaired voices, the members of a choir which forever practiced separately and never sang in concert.

When I rounded the boulder and caught sight of the wall, I understood why it needed a warning sign. Though it looked fully stable and well-grounded, its seaward face sloped out at, I would guess, a thirty degree angle. The landward walls likewise canted, though inward, almost like some sort of woefully mismade dome. A Maltese igloo, falling down, I thought and could not hold back a giggle.

"What's funny?" Frank asked, coming up beside me.

"Maltese igloo. Too hot for ice, so it's made of stone."

"And the opening's on top, not to the side."

"There's a hole at the peak?"

He nodded. There was the slightest haze of perspiration on his forehead – not from exertion, since his chest barely rose and fell with his breath – but something other. Elation? Excitement?

"So we're going in? To a cave? Another catacomb?"

"Another grotto. I think you'll recognize it." He began unknotting the rope from his waist, so I did the same. He recoiled it when we were both finished and set it at the base of the wall, braced by a flat rock. "We'll pick it up on our way out. Just a little while from now. Go on – climb up and take a look."

Despite the wall's slant its stones neither shifted underfoot nor did the

mortar powder away when I spread my fingers once or twice on the surface for extra support. At the height of the weirdly warped dome, there was an opening through which warmer air rose, along with a buttery hush, a great beast breathing in its sleep, or – "I get it. It's open to the sea down there somewhere."

"Yes. Take a breath. Do you smell it?"

"Some kind of herb. Rosemary?"

"Rosemary. Cultivated by the knights, though the kings of Sicily had raised it here before them. And who knows? Maybe even the priests of the goddess had too."

I put one hand down, curling the fingers around the lip of the opening and lowering my head. "It smells wonderful. Almost like sauce cooking." I looked back at him.

"Remember the campfire I mentioned."

"Someone's cooking down there? You're kidding?"

Frank shook his head. "And she's waiting for us." He laid his left hand on my shoulder and pushed, very lightly it felt, but I slipped over the edge of the opening and went headfirst into the grotto.

Lance Deal: Kennedy Head

My father asleep in his chair and
his head on an axis-tilt,
nose and moustache are the Andes.
My mother throws fish pellets
into the pond and slices cantaloupe over the water.
Koi rise and eat their color.
My sister counts money for a living, penning the fakes
with red ink.
She can smell when
I pull a bill from my wallet.
I ask her to guess how much is in my fist,
tell her there are two involved,
(a dog-eared Grant and a Kennedy head
wrapped in my sweaty palm.)
The house, air conditioned, is threatened
by an open window
and Dad slips deeper, his heavy-socked feet
twitching to some dream,
his eyes focus
on his home in the dark.

Evan Willner: *from* homemade traps for new world Brians

thirteenth state

When you undulate all over yourself, processes
surface and press against your skin as if your wrist
and rib bones and your greedy spine were birthing through
your last cheese cloth resistances (puncturing the
bladders that hold the meat and breath economies
separate and immaculately safe from summer's
particulate filth), unsocketing themselves from
your knit and schedules to spread careless with me in
the grass where the sun can tingle every length and
pore of them, and so can I. Sometimes I'm sure each
of your organs and every marrowed recess that
throbs pulls out of you to lie so I can see it.

fourteenth state: tapping

If it helps, say you remember tonguing all over
some trees, rooting before psychoanalysis
or prophylaxis, and that cold skin soft amber
arms were bathing in sap. Say that a drill sprayed bird
ecstasy over you, then a maple's infant
mouth inhaled for you and let its glossy ooze. Then
the hand. Maybe a nest was abandoned and you
climbed branches and broke and sucked egg sap until that
orphan taste pours from each egg you've eaten since, from
your blue veined collecting hand, the cracked howling birds
and all your self-serving memories, and dries in
to a skin smoothing over your mind's current folds.

twenty-fifth state

The pilgrims stood in clouds at the far coast, having rubbed
themselves across every field and alien leaf,
o and buffalo, every object a sunset
pulverizes, slapping the trail to puff it off
their clothes in dust pillars, and engineered themselves
homes on the last bluffs cantilevered out over
sea air so deep whipped with atomized slip rock and
surf froth that it seemed solid. Not that they didn't
know better but each one could lean out and breathe, in
the stillness of true religion, the airborne motes
of some once and future pacific land bridge one
thousand miles long that can be crossed but not crossed back.

Richard Peabody: Deleted Scene from “Big”

“Do you swing?”

Tom Hanks as Josh rolls his eyes and looks at the barely clothed hostess of the office party as she hides oval shaped green eyes behind a giant cobalt blue martini glass.

“Doesn’t everybody?”

She giggles. “Really.”

“I love to swing. I do it every chance I get.”

The woman is clicking her right heel on the parquet tile she’s so excited.

Elizabeth Perkins as Susan returns from the powder room. Eyes Tom, sizes up the slut, tries to break it up.

“Susan loves to swing. Don’t you Susan. Go on tell her.”

“Josh, I think we should go...”

“I never would have . . . well.” The blonde is now studying Susan, then Josh. “Do you want to go somewhere right now?” she says.

“Josh,” Susan’s pulling on his arm. “We’ll take a rain check,” she semi-smiles.

“Oh,” the blonde mopes a little. She’s in mid-wave across the room to somebody tall, dark, and bald, who is hustling over.

“Get a cab to drop you at the playground—“

“Ooh, you club it, too.”

“at Patchin Place.”

“The Playground. Wait. I don’t know it,” she bites a collagened lip.

“That’s my favorite. Nobody knows about it. It’s kind of hidden. Lots of bushes.”

“Bushes?”

Susan is tugging his arm forcefully now, as blondie moves closer and closer licking her lips.

“You can swing all day and nobody will bother you,” he gushes.

“All day?” The blonde’s eyes go even wider if that’s possible.

“Let’s go,” Susan nearly yells. Bald guy is now beside blondie and his tongue is literally lolling out like a mutt.

“Bye,” Josh says as Susan pulls him behind her.

And the blonde sighs and gives a royal little wave.

Katherine Valasek: Emilia Travels
on an Eastbound Train

she boarded the train
eastbound at an even pace
in a swollen yellow dress
barren, like the window next to her

they can hear her heart breaking
against the tempo of the track

she thinks of him and remembers years ago
when
they sailed on a ferry to climb the swirling steps of liberty,
up to the top
gazing out of her crown into the harbor of an island
where photographs of immigrants stared blankly right back at her
her name etched into the stone before her eyes
burning into the granite

"yes" she tells the conductor
"I am America and I will never stop dreaming of him, they are vivid and clear,
the way he remains"

the passengers look away
pretending she isn't there
that her suitcase is full of happiness
and not empty
because she carries it light
nothing in it
with no where to go

Joel James Davis: We Watched the Naked Women Walk Out of the Sea

A child understands fear and the hurt and hate it brings
— Nadine Gordimer

The directors have moved most of the folding chairs the color of an old penny into the large room. Most of the folding chairs are gone from the small room, moved into the large room where August stands. Where August stands fidgeting, staring with drowning eyes at the photograph of Christopher. Christopher, too, is gone.

So much is gone. So much more than before.
Gone.

They said half of Christopher's head is gone. The other half remains almost perfect. The half that is gone, the ruined half of his handsome head, leaves a cavernous hole from which brains, skull fragments, syrupy dark blood escaped. Gone is the perfect part in his perfect black hair. Gone is one of his pierced ears. Gone is half of the five-o'clock shadow with jaw muscles like apples.

Gone because of the .38 caliber bullet that roared through his cheek, his bone, his ear, his brain that held thoughts of despair and anguish so diverse, cataloguing all things egregious. Only half-gone because the aim had been so bad.

The bullet exited through the right side of his skull at a slight angle, lodging in the wall near the bathroom door of room 624 at the San Marco hotel in Alghero. The bullet imbedded itself in the wall decorated with aging flowered wallpaper and a framed print of a Kline painting. The Italian inspectors hypothesized Christopher was lying on the bed with his head toward the bathroom when it happened.

The same bed where he had made love each of the past five nights.
The same bed where a father and his young son had slept a week before.
The same bed where inspectors picked up pieces of skull, wet hair, and, as they called it, evidence. The ring they found was a size and a half larger than any of Christopher's fingers. Fingers his lover had enjoyed one night before.
It is August. It is August who stands alone near the front. Near the front where Christopher rests. Where Christopher rests inside the box under the hot flood lamps. August is alone.

August's brother could not make it in from out west. Too busy at work, Gus, he had told him the day before.

August is alone.

The clock in the rear of the room says it is three minutes until seven. Seven is the time the local paper listed for the mourners. Seven is the time they are allowed to enter and begin their mourning. Mourning with August. August is alone. Elizabeth is not here. I am Anju now, August, she has told him on innumerable occasions. Legally speaking, she was correct. She was now Anju. Elizabeth had died in court paperwork six years before. Hello, Elizabeth, he would say if he ever saw her. He and Anne had named her Elizabeth.

Elizabeth.

Hello, Elizabeth, he would say if he ever saw her.

The music is generic. Instrumental.

A few people appear inside the large doorway. Oak trim with three coats of gloss white. Off-white. Eggshell. Three coats. And people stand inside its epic frame. Four people. Four uncomfortable people.

August looks at the clock. Seven-oh-one. He knows the four people. He works at the bank with the four people. They work for him at the bank. And now they are here with him. They walk toward August. He is dressed in the same clothes he wears to the bank every day. His elliptical stomach protruding, stressing buttons and material. His tie is stained and too short. They each shake his hand, trying to care. They say things about Christopher. Good things about Christopher.

August's eyes continue to drown.

Other people filter in, and out, occasionally. Christopher has not lived in this town for the past five years. Seventeen. He moved away when he was seventeen. Five years before. No one remembers him. So August understands when other people filter in only occasionally.

Tommy Sanders filters in. Tall. Acne scarred. Sickly. Tommy hated Christopher. Chrissy the Sissy, he had called him for most of twelve years. He still hates Christopher, but Tommy is now in AA, and is trying to do good things. He still hates Christopher. He waits for the bank employees to finish their obligatory time with August. Obligatory. Four uncomfortable people finish their obligatory time with August. Tommy says obligatory things. Shakes August's hands. He leaves. He still hates Christopher.

Kevin Andersen filters in, too. Stocky. Athletic. August knows Kevin. August knows Kevin very well. Kevin hates August. He walks to the front where August stands. Where Christopher's coffin rests under the hot flood lamps. Kevin does not look at August. He does not shake August's hand. He does not touch August. There had been enough of that. Enough touching. Not enough for August.

Don't tell a goddamn soul!

Kevin never told a soul.

There had been enough of that. With Christopher, too. Until Christopher was seventeen. Until he left to live with Anju. Anju did not know. Anju still does not know. She, too, hated August. She, too, hates August. But she does not know. August did not try such things with her. He had no desire to try that with her.

Anne was alive then. She would have stopped August had she known. Anne did not know the things her husband did. Anju did not know. Anne did not know.

Don't tell a goddamn soul!

Christopher did tell a soul. One soul. And himself. Every day he told himself. Every day.

Every single day he told himself.

He had told himself that final day in room 624 at the San Marco Hotel in Alghero.

And he had told himself other things that day, too.

The directors come around presently asking August if everything is satisfactory. Fine. Everything is fine. Are there going to be enough chairs, August asks the directors. Yes, there'll be enough chairs. The directors look at each other. The tall one says, of course there'll be enough chairs.

Seven-twenty-six.

The music is generic. Instrumental.

Thirteen people wander about the room now. Obligatory. Neighbors. Librarians. Little League coaches. High school guidance counselors.

Obligatory.

The room is too warm. The room smells artificial. Artificial scents from a grocery aisle.

August looks up. Clifford and Delores stand inside the epic frame.

Rectangular. A peninsula up from the floor. Three coats of gloss white. Off-white eggshell. Clifford and Delores. A perfect couple. Attractive.

Healthy. August's next door neighbors for over twenty years.

Catherine stands behind them. Sobbing. Beautiful. Long hair the color of wheat bread. Mascara. A black suit. Pinstripes. Catherine is sobbing.

Behind Clifford and Delores. Behind her parents. Sobbing. Irina holds her hand. Her older sister's hand.

Irina and Catherine hold hands behind their parents. All four of them walk toward August. Catherine is sobbing. Catherine knows things. Irina knows things.

Clifford and Delores do not know things. Everything was fine. August's good life. Until now that is. Until now August had a good life, they each believe. Everything was fine. Until now, and they did not know things. Epic things.

Catherine sobs. She walks past August on the blue carpet. A few stains. To the coffin. The large shiny box. Too expensive, August had thought that morning. Catherine sobs. She sobs and she wishes. She has wished for the past five years and three months that she had told Christopher. He did not know. He could not have. Did he know? He could not have known. He could not have felt the same way.

Catherine sobs.

Catherine sobs, but is angry. At Christopher. Angry. Impossibly angry. She knows. And Irina knows. That is all. Those two. They know. And they know other things. They know things about Irina and Christopher. Those things.

Catherine sobs, but is angry.

Irina is angry. Irina is angry, too. Hair the color of wheat bread darkened with the toaster. Not burned. Darkened. Angry.

Sequestered.

August remembers earlier years with Christopher. The nights when Anne and Elizabeth were not home. Those nights. Soft. Hard. Pleading. Tears. Climax.

He wishes. August wishes. For one last night like long ago. One last night with Christopher.

Seventeen people wander about the small room.

Seven-forty-nine.

Look who's here, girls, Clifford whispers. Look who's here. Elizabeth. It's Elizabeth.

It's Anju now, Dad, remember? Irina says this.

Oh yes, that's right, Anju. Pretty name.

Anju stands inside the epic frame. Anju and her lover. They stand there surrounded by eggshell. Gloss.

Surrounded by eggshell.

August looks up from the obligatory conversation. Elizabeth, he thinks.

Anju walks in with her lover on her arm. There for support. Anju walks like a model. Like a model showing off the latest fall apparel. Long legs.

Knee high black boots. Short skirt, red like a pomegranate. Long black licorice hair. Bare arms. Henna tattoos. A frown on her face. Crying. Her lover equally attractive. Pouty lips. Sinewy. Black eye glasses. High, firm breasts. Athletic. Sorrowful.

They made love twenty minutes ago at the hotel. Anju whirling. Marta swirling. Together. Arching. Licking. Crying. Grieving.

The large room is warm. Smells. Artificial.

Anju walks with her lover on her arm. An expressionless nod to the waiting August. Past him. To the coffin. Next to Catherine. Next to Irina. They exchange hugs. All four cry.

Hello, Elizabeth, August says, but she does not hear him.
 Anju wonders if Christopher is happy now. Finally.
 Nineteen people now plus August. And the directors. Twenty-one. And the embalmer in the basement laboratory. Twenty-two. The laboratory that smells like room 624 at the San Marco Hotel during the investigation.
 Eight o'clock.
 The sequestered twenty-two all seem to notice the Frenchman at the same time. Tall. Terribly handsome. Impeccably dressed. Dark Hues. A navy tie with diagonal stripes the color of the moon when full. Twenty-something. Beautiful. Grieving.
 The Frenchman leaves the eggshell peninsula of the doorway. He is crying. Sobbing. Walking quickly toward August. He stops. Kisses August's cheeks. Right then left. Hugs him. He goes to the coffin. Kneels down. Crosses his chest. North. South. West. East. He kisses the coffin. Stands and kisses Catherine, Irina, Marta, Anju. Turns toward the people.
 The mourners.
Bonjour. Je m'appelle Alain. Je suis triste aujourd'hui que mon bon ami et amant, Chris, aient deceder. Je l'aime si tres beaucoup.
 They stare at the Frenchman. The mourners. They stare. And they speak no French. The Frenchman does not speak English. A few of the mourners understand a few of the words: *Bonjour. Chris. Beaucoup.*
 The Frenchman beats his fingers, longer and thicker than Christopher's, against his expensive suit jacket: *Je suis Alain! Je suis Alain!*
 The ring is missing from his long right-hand ring finger.
 Who is this man? No one in the large room has ever seen him before.
 No one has heard Christopher mention a man named Alain.
 No one has heard Christopher mention a man.
 No one has heard Christopher.
 It becomes unusually warm as the Frenchman stops and turns his ear up toward the ceiling. Toward the large weeping family of swirls and movement inside the plaster.
 He leaves the large room. The Frenchman is gone. For forty seconds.
 Alain. They know his name now. Alain is gone. For forty seconds.
 Eight-seventeen.
 Gone.
 The mourners look at each other. Dismayed. Who was that man? they all think. Where did he go? someone whispers.
 Forty seconds.
 Alain returns smiling. Content with something. He hands something shiny and round to the short director. The short director then exits the large room.
 The large room is warm. Very warm now.

The generic instrumental music is silenced. Gone. The mourners all pause. No one moves.
Who is this man?
No one had heard Christopher mention a man named Alain.
No one had heard Christopher.
Sequestered.
Music starts again. Different music. Livelier. Fewer instruments. Jazz.
No one recognizes the music Alain plays. No one knows Christopher's music. Alain knows. My favorite things. Alain smiles. His eyes become wet again.
Alain turns toward the mourners. He has many things to tell them about his friend. He tells them. He speaks again. Alain speaks French to them again. They, again, do not understand.
The mourners can not understand what Alain is about to say to them. He speaks the language only he and Christopher know. Of the people here, only he and Christopher know.

I am Alain.

My wonderful people. I am deeply saddened by the death of my dear sweet friend, Chris. He brought me much joy, and he was my very best friend. My best friend ever.

We shared a passion for this music you hear. We listened often to John Coltrane. Sometimes in a silent room. Sometimes with a wonderful meal, which we always prepared together. John Coltrane: My Favorite Things. Chris was one of my favorite things.

Chris's French was one of my favorite things. He spoke it perfectly. And in that perfect French he told me stories about this place, his home town. This place from which he was forced away.

He forced himself. He felt like he should not be here any longer. I speak openly now because it is important that Chris can rest in peace knowing that he forgives you and you forgive him. You do not know what I am saying. You do not speak my language. You did not speak Chris's language. That is for certain. But this is for Chris. Chris thought about these things every day. Every single day.

He thought about the horrific things you did to him, August. You, his father. He never called you father, though. He only called you August. These things changed his life and took him a direction he wished to never go.

One direction in which he wished to never go was the deep love he felt for Catherine. Very deep and real love. But he knew that that love could never come to fruit. He knew why, and he couldn't tell you, Catherine.

Another direction he wished to never go was Irina. Dear Irina. The worst night of Chris's life, far beyond any abuse from August, was the night he didn't stop when you screamed no. It destroyed him. And that is ultimately why he left.

And he loved you so much, Anju. He is indebted to you for taking him in, for caring for him the way you did.

He spent much time with a psychotherapist, and Chris and I both thought he was fine. We both thought he was happy. Getting much better. We both thought he was fine.

Until last weekend in Alghero, we both thought he was happy.

And as you all know, when I returned from gathering espresso and biscuits on Saturday, he had taken his own life.

But that part, his death, is not what I have in my heart from that week in Italy.

I have other things in my heart because we walked the beach along the Mediterranean each morning. And we watched the other people. One morning, after espresso and a biscuit, we watched two women.

They were lovers.

They were playing in the water.

They were naked.

They were middle-aged and lovely and plump and Italian.

And as they finished playing, we watched them.

With espresso still on our tongues, we watched the naked women walk out of the sea.

They were headed to their room to make love. We watched them.

Chris was holding my hand as we watched.

My lover. Our feet wet to the ankles.

In love. Chris and I. Lovers.

Alain stops talking. The large room is silent.

Alain wipes his tears. Kisses Christopher's casket. Hugs Anju, Marta, Catherine, Irina.

He leaves.

What did he say? someone says, breaking the silence.

What was it that man just said?

Edward Kim: The Birth of Rosíphae

A celestial song rained down. Children stood in the air, in a horn-shaped tower that spiraled over forest and lake. The tall structure swayed in the wind, spraying its chorus of small voices on the citizens below. Taken together the unified voice thundered a bright paeon in the first and second tongues, hitting registers so far out of reach the voice became Original. But anyone close enough could see the fear on the faces.

Inside a girl in the audience, the cells of a zygote multiplied. Every new cell was perfect in shape, a fair representation of the first. They filled the womb so much the girl could listen no more. Women reflected her luster in the lakes of their eyes, making way. A small dark soprano unchained herself from the tower, climbed down the bodies, and shadowed the girl home.

Around midday the girl was standing before her family sycamore, gazing into the mirror tied to it. The world! Plants! She stared at her face, the overgrown braids flanking her neck serpentlike, resting in coils in the hollows of her neck. Kryn, kryn, kryn, the girl said to the mirror. Aulo-Alyris? She smiled, petting her stomach, shaking her head.

Kryn-Alyris, a little voice said.

She looked down at the child beside her, the soprano. Small hands twisting together, mouth shimmering.

Sade, in my shadow, I did not see you.

The child rode the wind, disappeared. Reappeared behind the sycamore, peeking over its roots.

Sade, be still, when we speak. Nothing? What's wrong?

The child cackled, hid again. Aly, aly, I want to ask you something...

Kryn-Alyris looked up. The child in the tree was clean — brown ball of teeth and hair. Speak yourself, Sade. I can be a tree for so long. The branch shook and bobbed, steadied itself.

I want to know, Aly, how to be a thousand birds flying at once. Off a cliff at dawn over the sea. They say you know how, that you can show me, because you glow.

The child spread her wings, widened her eyes, stood on one foot, then the other. But Kryn-Alyris with two fingers bade the girl sit. Explain why.

Why what? Because everyone wants to? Didn't you? Isn't that the reason why we can? Shaking herself, speaking in another voice.

You like stories, Sade. You like tales and dreams; you are little. I used to, too. I tried for years but did not know how. I still don't. That is the truth. Do I glow? Thank you.

They say you can, the child insisted. With this you can, she said, holding

out the instrument.

Kryn-Alyris did not take it.

Is they a she? she asked.

They might be, said the child.

Sade, still? We know more than you think.

The child stared. Who? Who is we?

Ask another one of us, this one will tell you more, she will even show you.

Who? Who? Climbing down, getting close.

Kryn-Alyris smiled. If you have to ask, you already know.

The child looked at the instrument in her hand. Liar! Circle!

Fly to her now, fly fly –

Sade spirited to a speck on the sand. Curse her baby. Curse the world and all the evil in it. No one can eat the moon without flying. Everyone knows this.

Sade ran and fell under the shade of a beetle tree. On its cold shell, on a stiff upturned leg, she stretched herself out. Looked up at the bright markless sky, could not find the sun. In its place was a dark planet, a pupil watching over her body, unblinking.

The Uterus sat on the landscape, crimson and pink. Seven surgeons kneeled inside, holding tongs in their halfskin gloves, surrounding the swollen girl they commanded to breathe. They poured oil on her stomach and offered up names but the seed remained in the furrow. The gate is too narrow, the surgeons whispered, contemplating the scythe. No, voiced Rosiphae, entering the Uterus – against what, no one knew, for at that moment Kryn-Alyris deigned to move her genealogy forward. A stain spread through mudcracks dendritic in pattern and all the surgeons thought fearsome It's a girl, violent-faced and blue, and not-girl in places wrapped vinelike, blue, for the breath rising out of them all as the newborn struggled free.

What are you going to name her? the anesthesiologist asked.

They held her down, smeared lard on her inner thighs and across the enormous crown.

What have you in mind to name her? Aulo-Soleace asked.

Rosiphae.

Launched into infancy but the crawl never came. No steps to accompany the name, no naming except to create in language what did crawl across the chest every human's last wish. They wanted to burn it; some attempts were made.

The anesthesiologist called upon her daughter to seek the counsel of Celandine, what substance to use, what application. Cotyledon looked at her

mother and said, But the eldest died two years ago –

Hands all over the newborn. The child went. The dark intestine tightened more and cuts were made. Earth spilled onto their fingers. The particles powdered their arms and faces and rose to a cumulus the women coughed within, slowed against.

Rosiphae stepped out of the Uterus and limped along the empty houses. Crones in the distance looked up from the saltbird they were eating and shrieked at her. Breaking bones. She hobbled; she danced before them a broken axis, and they clapped. Her elbows winged out and she dropped her knotted strings. They tossed bones at her, glad of it, good for blond Mother-bear, what is her name? Me, Rosiphae said, turning and turning. The crones nodded with feathers in their teeth: may You thrive.

Cotyledon stared. Cotyledon appeared, standing between them, and stared. She said, I have to fill it. She said, I am the youngest and my oil is best. She carried a bowl. I don't know how, she said.

Rosiphae swept the child to a thorn-ringed hollow they crouched inside. We are alone here, Rosiphae said. No one is watching, and I will close my eyes. Rosiphae did not.

The child turned away and put the bowl under her. Nothing coming. I can't, the child said. Open it, Rosiphae said. Use your fingers. The child lost her balance, tried again. Rosiphae reached into the brambles, snapped off a horn. This will help, she said. It hurts, the child said. The bowl began to fill. Stop it. I am only watching, Rosiphae said. Stop looking, the child said. The bowl filled.

Alyris glided towards death's music. The surgeons dropped their masks, their bloodstained instruments on the ground. The fastest of the five fluted herself into a reed and whistled far from life's bank but Alyris, not even struggling, not able to lift a hand, smiled and sank under.

Enormous, the head of the newborn gleamed crimson and pink. Sunlight fell strong through the smokehole and the newborn screamed at all the useless people. She looked at the rope in her hands and tried to pull herself up. The mountain was bleeding a river onto her, still. She was weak, little. The giants waited till nightfall and carried the mountain away. The mountain was named Alyris and they put it to rest elsewhere. They carried the newborn away.

The newborn grew in the cracks of the sun-drenched mountains. She sprouted to a long thin stalk; her head wobbled on the swaying stem. She would wipe the dew from her face every morning and search the false-colored air, haze of city, amplified flowers. She fell down often. Her body curled like

a question every time the giants came near. But their answers were too smooth to grab hold of. She rose to their faces and uncurtained her dark chest but their eyes were darker filled windows no ladder could reach. She opened a tree and read between the lines. She counted back five rings, seven, nine – and stopped.

On the distant shores, thousands of stones rippled and swirled, loud turrets that began to rise and walk and grow. They soared in multiple strands that scoured the landscape, scooped out trenches and graves. The shepherdesses fastened each a syrinx and sang till hundreds of women blackened the trees. The women came out in droves, blinking at the noise. High winds swirled their hair.

Someone was knocking on the roof. The knocks were loud, persistent. Alyris twitched and moaned and turned her face toward the sound. She perceived the roof but could not raise her hand.

She lifted her head and studied her body, regarded the difference in shape. The knocking continued, and also now, a voice. She located the face, familiar, watched the lips move up and down. Then they stopped moving. Must be her turn to speak. She opened her mouth and said a few words, maybe a sentence. The face did not smile. Alyris continued speaking despite herself.

Rosiphae listened and limped around the body in the room. Speech kept coming from it, useless sentences. She reached over and pulled out the Loom.

Alyris lifted her eyes and saw a tall thin figure leaning over her. She struggled away and turned her head. They were inside the Burrow. Above children screamed and birds circulated backwards and smashed against the ground. She could smell the pyre in the room. But she looked next to the figure and saw a Life.

The Life belonged to her.

It was small and blue.

Already Rosiphae set up the Loom, threaded the shuttle. She wove a coarse cloth while Alyris studied the Life, sang to it ancient verses in the mother tongue. Rosiphae liked two things slow. The first was her hand, long fingers packing down thread. The second was the struggle, the human stuff tightening her throat – in particular, the distance between the mouth of the Life and her friend's lachrymal breasts.

Outside the stones thundered and pockmarked the first of the houses. Refugees glanced back at the sky's dark tendrils, ran faster towards the fortress. The tongue artists closed their temples and prayed in clusters.

Schools of laoshimen surfaced to witness the event, a hundred heads speckling the sea, blinking.

The smell now was a stove, Alyris realized. Fire, oak, scorched stone. She asked some questions but the weaver continued to hum.

I am hungry as a tree, Alyris said. Every bone of my appetite is stiff.

She spoke beneath her forehead's green shine, Rosiphae saw. The girl's limbs started to move, cracking the glaze, penetrating gravity. Some trees have wrinkles in the bark and some have too much bark. Alyris, despite daily communion, swallowing the chrism, continued to age.

Her breasts flowed more than Fountain Progenitor. Clear-white streams settled in the drapes of her stomach.

Rosiphae tied down the final string and separated the cloth from the Loom, held it out for approval. She laid the cloth next to Alyris like a hole in the ground and placed the Life on top of it.

I'll do it for you, Rosiphae said, seeing her friend struggle. She wrapped the cloth tenderly, ceremonially, around the Life and placed it on top of Alyris' heaving chest.

A saltbird collided against the roof of the Burrow. Rosiphae stretched her neck towards the shaft of light and saw a sideways stream of rocks and animals.

The body was blue. A wandering child had discovered it. She called the others and they sprang toward the smell, parting the tall sun-grass around it. The body waved its stublike appendages, swished its undergrown tail. The girls touched the legendary blue skin, the scales which had long ago dried and now felt like shark.

It must have traveled far, the girls said.

Do you think it is worth eating?

It is probably filled with insects and worms, if that tastes good to you.

We can open it and see.

They selected the sharpest stone and turned over the thick heavy body and its fishlegs wriggled in the air. The stone was handed to the youngest and they prodded her to make the cut.

The orphan protested, saying it was a bad omen. The others laughed, their throats stretching out past their mouths, whipping her face with raw, cartilaged taunts.

The orphan stared hard at the swollen belly. Her hand moved faster than their eyes and they were laughing still when the blue stomach squelched open and a river of seeds steamed around their feet. The swarming mass unfolded thousands of wings and enveloped the transfixed girls in a blind cloud while

already the orphan ran.

She broke through trees and ran without breath in patterns unheard of until the landscape was no longer itself and dustmotes hung in the complex air. She heaved in silence. There were objects strewn across the earth – carved sticks, statues, polished bone. Small birds beat their wings very slowly over a pile across the field, and a voice called out to her.

You. Roaming my land.

The orphan stopped and searched for the body of the voice: it was coming from the rock. I am sorry, she called. I did not know places belonged to people.

Who do you belong to? the rock asked.

The orphan looked at the hole in the face of the rock. It asked her again. The child said she did not know.

The rock told her to come closer. Be yourself, it said. Do not be afraid. Come here and show me who you are.

A face emerged from the hole enough to never have been seen before.

The orphan spared the stranger the offense of running away so she would like her better, so she would harm her less.

Your hands are small, the stranger said.

I am still small, answered the child. But I am growing.

The stranger had magnificent long white hair.

Would you not ask after me? the stranger said, after some silence. Who am I? What am I doing? Are you not curious?

I am not allowed to talk to No-Names, the orphan said, staring at the ground.

How do I spend my time? Where are my kin?

I will stay with you, if that is what you want, the child said. Only for a while.

The tall figure grinned as if she could think of no better answer. A door grew suddenly in the mountain face – they passed through with torches, climbed over marble headstones and slid down wet walls to land in a shallow lagoon. They swam across and came to rest on a bed of polyps that sucked on their limbs and back.

So this is what good feels like, the orphan said. She turned to find the woman holding out a tall branch. It was long and light and covered with hands. The hands were blue and red and clapped together when she shook it: a sound like rain. This pleased the child further.

The feathers, when the woman brought them out, were also not native. Where did you go, the orphan asked, to find these things? The stranger shook her head.

I give them to you, she said – and laid the orphan facedown on the polyps. With twine she tied each long red feather to limbs that were smaller, five in

all, including a tail. The face of the child darkened to know such pleasure before another, a stranger, who quivered her on command to stand and strut. Spread those wings. The orphan balked.

I am not complete, she said and held out her fingers.

The woman nodded and returned with flint. Fastened each to every knuckle to form ten talons. She wound about the mouth a pair of abalone shells that clacked every time the child spoke.

The rest of the afternoon the orphan pranced and preened herself while the stranger drew pictures of birds on the wall, portraits to mark the new birth. Come evening the birdchild wearied of the show and simply asked for food, for she was hungry.

The stranger hunted and gathered a fistful of what the child hoped she would not.

But I am not a bird, the child protested.

What kind of creature walks around all day wearing feathers?

Birds do.

And what kind of creature shakes its long tail to get the water off?

Birds do.

Then what does that make you?

A bird.

Almost. Can birds, finally, talk?

No.

Then how do birds ask for the worm?

The orphan's face darkened even more as she cleared her throat and began to sing. The sad noise echoed inside the cave, warbling far beyond the mouth of the mountain to unknown ears. She sang until she was out of breath, and her mouth was filled.

Outside the damage patrol slouched through the rubble. Houses were smashed, smeared across the sand with every belonging on display. No one could translate the leftover scrawls of albino stones, the hieroglyphics of sharper ones. An elder stumbled out of the wreckage, displaying a tufted gray question. People ran to it and held their hands out to stroke it and some tried to answer it. But the question did not flutter.

Earthwives questioned Rosiphae. Where is the bereaved? The recently deceased? We must measure out the right dimensions for a fitting-enough pinebox.

Ceremonies, ceremonies, Rosiphae muttered.

Gifts! Grief candles, moon cakes, lung poppers; sticks; shells; the children found a blue crawfish. They showed Rosiphae the soft carcass – it was heavier than she imagined.

Wherever Alyris might be, the door should remain closed, Rosiphae told the women. It is not as before.

What happened? they demanded. Why must she eat from the nervous goat of solitude? The first mother to lose a child manifested the ancient wish to rid herself; now she dances in the background.

I lost more, Rosiphae said – to which the earthwives could not respond, did not know how. They laid a branch on her shoulder, pointed her fallen face toward a great moss elder. The serpents have taken her, they said, broken her back and spawned new kind. But that is not to say she will ever stop growing.

They tucked in their eyes and shuffled toward the original prairie. Six feet under, hunting their footfalls, Alyris crawled from chamber to chamber, squeezing through tight valves and arteries. She pressed her ear against nearest earth and imagined the wives totemmed across the skyline, whispering about her fossilized womb, holding a chambered nautilus for example, filling it with sand.

Alyris shouted their names; no answer. Bruises blossomed as she pounded the ceiling. No string, nothing to mark the passage out. The Burrow grew narrow and cold.

Rosiphae maneuvered down the smokehole and found her friend buried in the deepest part of the Burrow. She turned her over, searched for the valve and widened the hole with her finger. The entrance tightened, relaxed. The walls were soft. It is either me or nature, Rosiphae said, placing more of herself inside. The membrane trembled against the unknown substance. We must not repeat ourselves, Aly. Parasites have been known to kill.

The chamber contracted like a brightened pupil, and pulsed, a small brook beating a cardiac song against her fingertip. Half-awake Alyris asked after herself, how often her name was mentioned by the voices above, how well she was remembered.

They talk about you still, though not as you would think.

Days under the earth dusted their throats and made thicker their syllables.

Alyris fell into a trance deep enough for Rosiphae to free from her grasp the cold blue Life she held still under her arm. Rosiphae carried it to another room, sprinkled seeds on it and worked them in, rolling the soft new flesh with force. The Life wheezed, gasped. The limbs were bent, skewed, twisted until they snapped. The head. She used tools to smash it. She used a rock to smash it. The features changed with every blow – happy, sad – became less known. Now fire.

Now water. Alyris would be hungry when she woke. It was her birthday. There would be gifts and stories and cicadas. Rosiphae wiped the back of her hand across her mouth and picked up the Life, placed it in a bone-colored cage suspended from the roots above. It swung in and out of moonlight.

The orphan sat suspended in a cage, was asked to sing in a voice higher than she possessed. The stranger employed different strategies to teach her to sing, but the child did not cry, despite the heat in her face.

The largest crevice in the cage did not allow the complete passage of her head. Many times the knotted boughs tongued her temples, causing her to scream until a genial knock from the stranger sent her back. Use your talons, the stranger suggested, so the child sheared her head and knew only the coldness of the cave at night on her scalp, a larger head than many. She held her breath and tried not to think but the cage always crushed her.

She continued to sing for food, though she ate very little. A mound of half-eaten animals, including the original worms, collected on the ground beneath the cage. The stranger was mostly elsewhere in the mountain but her eyes were never far. Questions fluttered across the cave, all of them wrong, and the answers warbled reluctantly from her scalloped mouth. The orphan gazed about the walls, their designs more than thrilling. It was monumental to think how a clear shaft of sunlight could calm so little.

She would welcome the foragers when they came, even if they were the children who pressed their ears against the earth pretending to hear a voice calling her name. The feeding stick held a cold compress that found her burning forehead at night. The stranger promised to free her if only she would eat. Morsels were smaller, origin unknown, dipped in bright appetizing sauces. Wearily the captive pulled them off the stick. They thrallled.

She swallowed water, poisoned or not. She picked the remains from her teeth with her claws. Good bird, the woman said. The orphan hid the strength the food gave her beneath her wings and continued to limp around the cage. She rotated her neck slowly, waiting. How well you love the one who gave you birth. How well you love the one who made you.

That night the wind blew colder. The cage door was open. She climbed out, hung high, dropped on the dead mound. She gathered her lungs and was gone. World of thanks.

But escaping she found sleeping on the bed of polyps the warden of the cave. The orphan could not swim quiet or fast enough, knew the stranger to be testing her.

Moon oils diced the air in sweet ribbons that wrapped her close enough to see, beneath the muslin spread, the swollen feet. The child struck, having no other choice, the tendons behind the ankles. Unmoored the feet relaxed further.

She removed the sheet and turned the tyrant over, gaped at all the sudden

missing parts. A vegetation stained the edge of every subtraction, and a variety of pests continued the work, eating more. She heard a distinct clapping, as of leaves.

At last the creator meets the created, the stranger's voice announced, surrounded by applause. Disembodied laughter. The orphan's head twitched from torch to torch. No sign, and the body beneath her did not move.

Take, eat, the body is leftover and the leftover is yours. Finish the project, parasite. Enjoy.

The worms moved in the child's stomach. They twisted inside and prostrated her on the polyps with her mouth pressed against the cold breast. Drink, Rosiphae. There is a river flowing beneath! The child on hearing her name pushed against the shoulders, the arms; the hands had been harvested, she saw, but the face was preserved.

Rosiphae fell into the lagoon and thrashed, making no real progress. The worms inside clutched her tighter and kept drawing her back to the body. The reunion of their flesh, finally, was both strange and familiar.

On New Beast Day Alyris was found lying on the ground clutching handfuls of soil. Women flocked from the fortress and released bright prayers, not believing. The earthwives carried her on their shoulders to the remains of the pavilion. They poured water over her head to wash away the mud. Who must we thank, they asked, for bringing her back to light? Rosiphae stepped forward, carrying a bundle. Among the crowd spread smiles and whispers. Some said Rosiphae was a good friend.

The earthwives also fetched gifts. They lit blossom-scented grief candles and placed them on top of the makeshift altar. Alyris received a necklace of beetles and sat before their food, all the cakes and birds. She watched the crowd, so many piercing faces. More than hungry, she tasted to please. She pressed the lung poppers to her chest. The blue crawlfish she shrank away from, then apologized and ate.

Rosiphae served the main course. She unwrapped the black cloth only enough for Alyris to see. The faces wanted to know but Rosiphae held up a hand: all grew quiet, bowed their heads. She reached inside and snapped off a piece. Alyris turned and received it inside her mouth. She could have been asleep, the crowd noticed.

Halfway through the feeding, the girl came alive. She crouched behind the altar clutching her stomach, one hand over her mouth. The front row stood up and clapped. Slowly the crowd rose to its feet, shouting and slapping their palms together, filling the pavilion with noise. At last Alyris rose behind the altar. She watched their lips and teeth chant, the correction staff against the

small of her back.

They want you to enjoy it, Rosiphae whispered. Can you do it? For me?

She helped Alyris by placing her fingers deep inside the mouth, behind the canines and molars, opening her up like a trap. Each new bite mangled her fingers, crunching the knuckles and bones, until they were fully ground and swallowed. Rosiphae forced her arm further down the throat, and then her shoulders and neck. Her face was delicately chewed, at first. The bare scalp. The soft skull and everything within. Headless, the body remained. Alyris ate with relish the breast, the ribmeat, the tough organs. The tangy stomach and tubes. Alyris snapped the bones and sucked the marrow, tossed away the spine. She sank her teeth into the thighs and shanks. The congregation stamped their feet and sang in her honor, praising her appetite.

With each bite Rosiphae grew stronger. Inside Alyris, she burst and burgeoned with life, nourishing the entire hateful carcass the two of them now shared.



ANEMONE SIDECAR

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