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“And I am all the things I have ever loved: scuppernong wine, cool baptisms in silent water,
dream books and number playing.”

Toni Morrison

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LOST ARCHIVE 2

fabio sassi

WATCHING A SQUIRREL PULVERIZED BY THE PASSAGE OF AN
ELECTRICAL CURRENT THROUGH ITS BODY AFTER CHEWING
THROUGH A POWER LINE DECOMPOSE OVER THE COURSE OF
SEVERAL MONTHS

joanie braddock

1.

I wanted to call you. It was dark-noon.

I was rubbing the blood off my razor.

Early that summer, a tree collapsed.

I have been without power before.

We had a generator then.

Don't lecture me about correlation.

Don't lecture me about power.

I have been without power before.

2.

I have weeped over the bodies of unknown things,
but never before collected their bones.

It's hard to see a corpse and not think
it belongs to you. I took vertebrae. Pieces of jaw.
Synechdochal stuff. I say: this is the squirrel
who knocked out the power grid. The lineman
says this happens all the time. In Schenectady
my birth certificate is filed. There's an open
staircase at that courthouse. Big enough
for a child's body to slip through.

3.

How can a squirrel
fall
artificially
into power

The song goes: I need
you more than

want you

4.

Here is what's left:

Pulverized wood
I mistook for spine

Blood [on my face,
on the body]

Seventy dollars
I will never call to ask for

Two vertebrae
A piece of jaw

A tree that's gone
A body that's gone

LIFTING

emma wynn

First, we practice standing on the ground -
not as if we need permission or
perched on our toes like Barbies,
but as if we grew out of it.

We shoulder the bar,
shift our feet, assume the day's iron weight.
Knees torqued outward just slightly,
our thighs shiver and grip.

Stippled with the itch of sweat we can't let go to scratch,
we squat, then surge to standing - women
refusing to disappear into our babies' mouths
or shrink, pretty and pleasant,

bearing it.
True here, what isn't in life -
that what doesn't kill you
makes you stronger.



IMAGINARY MAP 1

fabio sassi

BOILING A WHOLE BRILLIANT ARMFUL DOWN TO NOTHING

emma wynn

At the kitchen table
Cody, carefully sharpened pencil
winging over white-capped page,
little body upright, concentrated -

In the place our drones are bombing, the mothers feed their babies grass.

“My big sister is cooking spinach”
he has printed boldly,
wondrously, across two lines.

*They live in holes in the pockmarked buildings,
these country women we aren't saving from anything.*

“No ‘e’,” I say
and he turns the pencil over

*If we are afraid of winter,
we do not understand the frozen wolf that stalks their children,
its tongue like a rope.*

scratches with his worn eraser
at the end of the sentence.
The diligence of his small hands!

*As children wither into dust,
into dunes upon dunes.*

their careful reforming of the period,
his little mouth blowing away
the pink shreds of his mistake.

*Mothers open their cooking pots with a wild hope.
Inside, the vast desert crackles.*

My spinach has wilted under its sheen of water -
In everything I do,
this silent ache.

COUPLET 61-115

david koehn & rebecca resinski

erased pages from The Sign of the Four by Arthur Conan Doyle

61

secret

window

doub le

discovery

115

like our

sky

standing



UNDERWATER DREAM

steven tutino

COUPLET 28-87

david koehn & rebecca resinski

erased pages from The Sign of the Four by Arthur Conan Doyle

28

impulse

bolted

sealed

wish

87

if

oysters

study

soul

SIXTY IMPRESSIONS PER HOUR

robert beveridge

Giftwrap in the service hallway
and no payments until Easter
if you act within the next forty-
eight hours. We've hired
a seasonal army of possums
to handle the overflow. You'll
marvel at how well their claws
go through tape. Even better, we
can pay them in trash, offer
time for meditation, night
school for those who want
a career in secretarial,
the trades, dentistry. All this
and your Christmas presents
wrapped in such a professional
manner you'd swear they came
from the Sears catalog.

@Interviewblanche

design graphique



STUDIO PARIS

Rue Saint-Honoré
75001 Paris
FRANCE

TROP TARD

bianca mancini

TRANSPLANT

madeline mags

Lucy marched down the concrete steps of the elementary school defiantly, her light-up princess shoes glowing faintly underneath the brightness of the sun. It had been a long day for a third grader, full of other children cutting in the lunch line and the boy that sat behind her sticking a wad of gum in her hair. Now, as if to add insult to injury, her teacher had required her to stay until 3:45 to perfect her arithmetic.

What did she even need long division for, anyway? It's not like she wanted to be a rocket scientist. Lucy's ambitions oft reflected those of the main character in whatever book she was voraciously consuming at the time. Currently, her attention had been seized by a young girl who did detective work, so obviously, Lucy saw solving crimes as her calling. It was just too bad that there was very little crime to go around in her community, which was surrounded by a large gate and kept on 24/7 guarded watch. Lucy wasn't exactly sure how she was supposed to solve crimes when no one was committing them in the first place, but she figured she could always be a dirty cop. That way, she could carry out justice and commit crimes herself. A win-win occupation.

With her princess shoes still shining with each bounding step she took, Lucy readjusted the straps of her backpack, shifting them higher onto her slender shoulders, and checked the Barbie watch that dangled from her slim wrist. 3:48. Now, she was late for her appointment at the hospital.

Lucy was very grown-up for a third grader, her mother often reminded her. She walked herself to and from school, packed her own lunch (a peanut butter sandwich, fruit cup, and granola bar), and even made sure to get to the hospital on time so that she could receive a Treatment. Only now she was late, and if she didn't hurry, the nurse might give the Treatment to 1 somebody else. If the nurse gave the Treatment, *her* Treatment, to someone else, what then? Lucy didn't exactly know. She had never missed a Treatment.

Perhaps her head would explode. Perhaps her skin would turn inside out, leaving the sensitive veins exposed. Or perhaps she would start aging in reverse. Lucy thought she had seen that in a movie once. Of all the possibilities, Lucy decided that the aforementioned one was the worst, because there was no way she could endure first grade again. Regardless of the true outcome, Lucy was sure of one thing: the Treatments were of utmost importance, and she was about to miss hers.

She hopped along the sidewalk, not stopping to kick a rock or squish a leaf like she normally would have. She had to force her attention back on the task at hand when she passed by an especially crunchy looking leaf, one that must have just fallen. She imagined the sound it would make being crushed underneath the pink soles of her shoes, and she wished she had more time. Curse old Mrs. Hagert, making her stay late. Some nerve that woman had.

Mrs. Hagert should have been more understanding. After all, had she ever missed a Treatment as a child? Lucy assumed the answer was a firm "no", given the fact that Mrs. Hagert was still alive and breathing. People who missed one too many Treatments didn't often make it far enough in life to become a "Mrs".

Lucy's thoughts continued to wander, the skip in her step still present, and gaining speed. It was because of her quick pace that she almost didn't notice the heart lying hidden in a thicket across the street. She caught a glimpse of it, and her own non-functional heart almost skipped a beat. She blinked a few times, trying to make sure that she wasn't hallucinating. Maybe the long division had gotten to her head,

and this was a type of mirage. However, after rapidly closing and 2 opening her eyes what she deemed to be plenty of times, the heart did not disappear. In fact, the image almost seemed to grow sharper, clearer. She could make out the ventricles and individual arteries. Therefore, she could only assume that it must be real. A real life heart. She shook her head, her messy blonde hair falling around her shoulders.

Jesus Christ, a heart! Right here! Never in Lucy's life would she have thought to be so lucky. However, she did not allow herself the privilege of getting her hopes up. For all she knew, it was just as non-functioning as her own heart. Or perhaps it was rotten. Lucy figured that hearts would rot away after some time, left out in the elements like that. She had even seen some people's hearts rot away while they were still inside their bodies.

She looked both ways, once, twice, before skipping over to the opposite sidewalk. She took her backpack off, throwing it down rather roughly beside her, and began to crawl under the bushes. It wasn't too far in, but the thicket had low hanging branches, and she did her best not to rip the sleeves of her windbreaker. She reached out and grabbed the heart as gently as her stubby fingers could. It was rather squishy, and made a gross kind of wet sound when Lucy touched it. She figured that was a good sign, though, as it meant there must be blood in it. Latching onto the heart with the precise intent of a surgeon, she pulled it up from where it sat and scooted her way back to the world of the living.

She sat back on her heels and gazed down at her cupped hands. She unfurled her fingers like a flower, showcasing the treasure that lay inside. She couldn't believe what she held in her own hand. A heart. A real, actual heart. It was a nice red color, not as deep as the color of blood, but with enough tint to insinuate that it was healthy. It was rather slimy, and for a moment Lucy feared that it would slip right out of her grasp. She tightened her hold on it a bit more and smiled. 3 A heart, seemingly perfect, was now in her possession. It pulsed, beating with a rhythm that was far more steady than her own.

For a brief moment, the thought of to whom it might have belonged did cross Lucy's mind, but she let it pass. After all, there was nothing she could do about it now. Wherever the mysterious donor was, they clearly did not need it anymore.

The fate of the original owner, however gruesome, was not of her concern.

Finder's, keeper's, right?

No more Treatments at the hospital! Lucy couldn't help thinking to herself. *No more needles, no more nasty swabs, and now more bandy-thing that squeezes my arm!* Her whole body felt warm, flooding with an immeasurable amount of joy at the realization. Nike was standing right before her, all she needed to do was reach out and take her hand. But her uncertainty stopped her. Her tiny eight year old brain ran through all the possibilities, and boy, were there a lot of them.

Lucy had once heard a story about a young girl, quite like her, whose mouth had disappeared. One day it was on her face, as usual, and the next: POOF! Gone. Obliterated. Never to be seen or heard from again. There was another story about a girl whose eyeballs fell out, dangling from the socket by the thin veins. She could still see, but it was rather cumbersome having to maneuver her eyes whilst they were hanging from strands. Oh! And there was that girl woke up one morning and could only speak French. Lucy had never been to France, and she wasn't sure she would be able to fit in within her community without speaking the common tongue.

Lucy didn't know if there was any truth to these legends, or what the stories had to do with heart transplants, or why all of them revolved around young girls, but she was too concerned with the matter at hand to ask herself these questions. There were too many "maybes", and she just didn't have the time.

Lucy took a deep breath and steeled herself. Clutching onto the heart tightly, she stood up as tall as she could, her newfound resolve making her seem bigger.

But now came the hardest part. Would her body accept the new heart? She had come this far into the process, she at least had to try. Filling her lungs to maximum capacity, she readied herself for the process. Lucy transferred the new heart to her left hand and reached across her body with her right, pushing it up against her own flesh. She pushed and pushed until she felt her body receive the hand, it sliding in underneath the skin as though pulled in by a vacuum.

The feeling of a hand searching around inside her chest was not unfamiliar to Lucy; the nurses at the hospital had given her many Treatments that included such invasive measures. However, maneuvering around her organs with her very own hand was a different feeling entirely. Lucy could feel the blood pumping frantically through her veins, its consistency a bit too thin. She was made aware of the tendons stretching and pulling against each other with each move she made. The whole process was best summed up as "squishy", and she was rather looking forward to getting it over with.

After a bit of fumbling around inside her body, she finally found what she was looking for. Her tiny fingers slipped into the opening of the pulmonary artery and latched unto the diseased atrium. Taking one last deep breath, Lucy gripped onto her old heart and pulled.

It came out with a *POP*, not really hurting at all. She had anticipated it to be a very painful process, but what she felt at the moment was more of a slight discomfort. Nothing to complain about. She stared at the organ in her hands. It was a brownish color, with hints of gray. Each vein was blue from the sudden lack of oxygen, and the entire thing wheezed and sighed, as if giving out a dying breath. With an equal parts fascinated and disgusted look at the sickly, brown heart, she set it lightly on the ground beside her backpack (just in case she needed it again). Shifting the found heart back to her right hand, she again squished it against her chest, pressing so hard that for a second she feared it might burst.

Maybe it won't be a successful transplant... Lucy thought disappointedly. Just as she was about to give up, however, the heart slipped its way into her body and locked into place with a sharp *CLICK*. After a brief period of readjustment, Lucy could feel the heart begin to beat inside of her body, much faster and stronger than her old one ever had. She smiled, a small thing gracing her elfish face that was more about disbelief than true happiness.

She bent down, grabbed her old heart, and threw it in her backpack to dispose of later. Lucy didn't know how exactly she would get rid of it, but she was sure she would think of something. After all, she was very grown-up for a third grader.

She slung the bag around her shoulders, not concerned with its contents now that she had no use for an old, diseased heart, and began her steady pace towards the hospital again, but now with a new goal in mind: she would arrive to meet her mother and surprise her by revealing her new heart! Lucy whistled, skipping along to the beat of her new heart, and as she skipped it skipped, too, until they were both skipping and the world was skipping and everyone on it was skipping and all of their hearts were still no good.

AN ELEGY TO MY FAILED REVOLUTION

alex legrys

I want to drink
dilapidation out of
tea-cups and let
the cracked bricks
sprinkle on my tongue

all the voices caked
in cigarette ash
would never bother
to serenade me
but I wish
they would

and the boys in pants
five sizes too
large never turn
their head--
but I'd unionize
that gas station
for them



SEEK WITH CAUTION*

zaji cox

**Click the title to watch this dance piece or visit our website*

LAKE MICHIGAN, TWO FEET UNDER

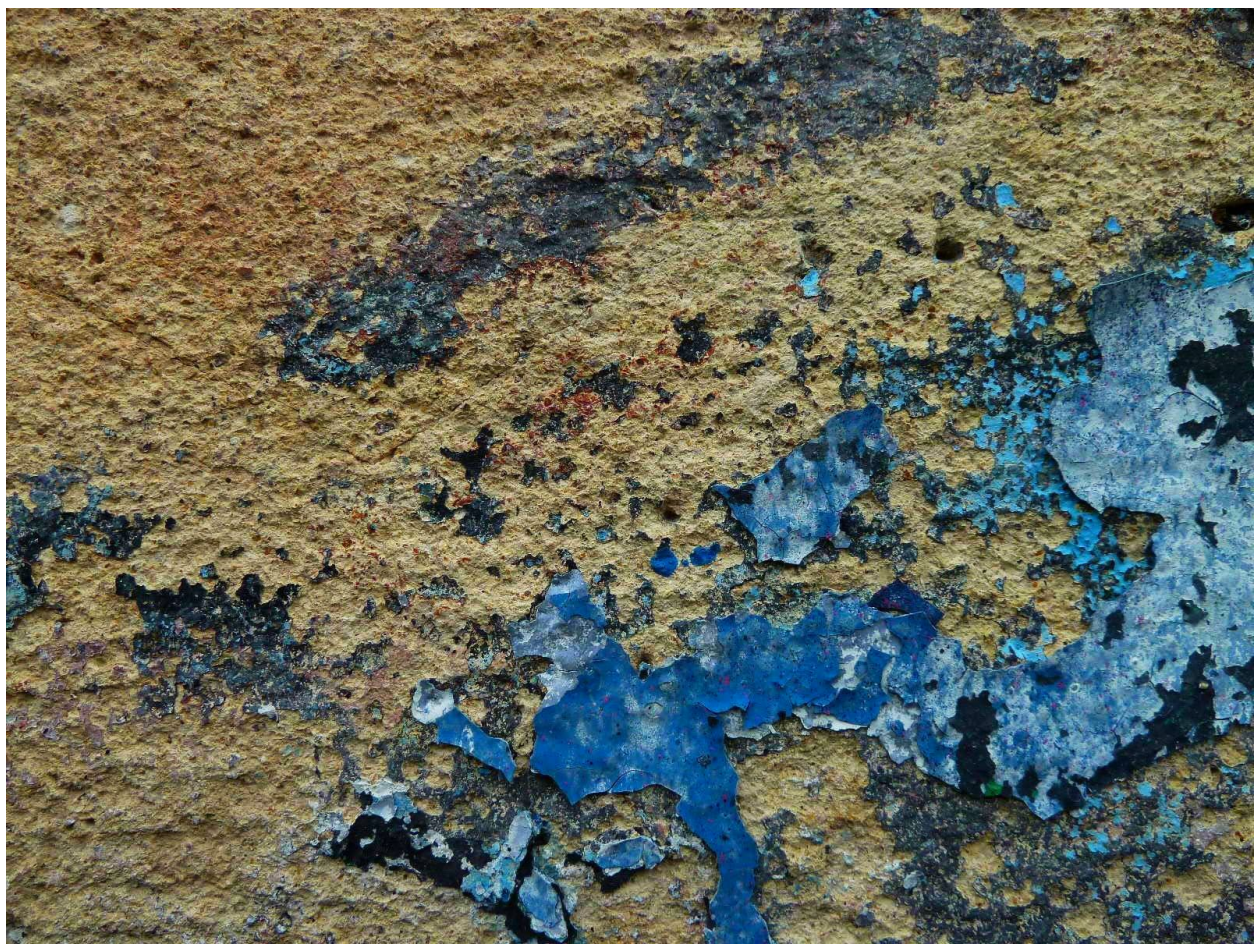
madeline lauver

Eyes flit open, tears mixing instant with water.
I make a magic pupil potion, it flows

around my face as I spin alone in warm waves.
Silver fishes weave between my legs

as I look up, seeing the sun through the lake.
I love a sweet morning. I love

thinking that because I am in the water, I am more
fluid than most.



IMAGINARY MAP 2

fabio sassi

WORTH

madeline lauver

Our claws are only keratin, but we love them as gold, and I won't lie and say we don't still love gold. Gold like the evening screaming for dusk; we love it in the murk, in the sunset hidden by the storm, in the times when negative space is thicker than its pot. We've said I love you in that muddied air; we've touched our clawtips to your flesh; we've filled up with water and blood and spit and pretended to be real; we've found the recipe for normalcy and, my lord, we've dissected it. We're still arranging the teeth and hairs and other diatoms; soon we'll have a mask to hide behind; we'll shrink to the size of a pinhead and then we'll look the same as you. We'll crack off our beak and smile wide with our new jewels and our arms will wave a cry of hello, how are you still believing that you're free, you'll think that I am right, and I am you, and I am just one thing.

I AM WRITING FROM JERUSALEM

meira kerr-jarrett

from beneath a netted wig cap,
from beneath a rainless sky, mountain wind
bending date palm branches, stones softening
from so many feet, streets lined
with bougainvillea, sweaty shirt
peeling from my baby's chest.

I am writing from where blood rose
like sea level in winter, where that happened
many, many times, where my husband sits
by the temple mount and studies
in a language that no one speaks anymore,
where one baby was pulled from my body

and another was pushed. I am writing
from between East and West, where there is no
real line, but where we draw it anyway,
with a thick black marker, from where I visited
my daughter's preschool teacher's neighborhood,
on a hill next to a house where different

generations live together, the youngest riding bikes
through streets made of dust. Behind them,
a concrete wall cuts the sky. This city is chopped
like limbs from an animal, and cooked in separate dishes
each with its own name. My daughter says
"I'm from Jerusalem," and I don't know what to say back.



COLORED & BLACK

dyamond gordon

THIS IS THE EARTH BEFORE IT SEPARATED AND THAT IS MY FATHER STRADDLING THE MOVING AND THE STILL

meira kerr-jarrett

Now I emerge
from a flat plane
where the world's surface
is being pulled
like a rug
across the living room.

The grass holds the trees
and the trees
hold the doves
and the doves don't care
as their nests inch
through the open sky.

He asks me to crouch
with him, watch it all
slink away. I go.
There is a river flowing
between us
and everyone else,
and the people don't feel
themselves move.

I wake clenched
and clinging to my bedrail.
I don't want to be the last
ones. Say it seven times,
the siddur says,
I have seen a good dream.
You have seen a good dream.
All the people disappeared
into a swirling sky.
May it be decreed
that it be good. It is good.

ON A FEBRUARY DAY, YOU SMELL LIKE SUMMER

emily petersen

It's the salt, perspiring from the small of your back after a long walk in the heat. Sunscreen is caked on your red shoulders, and little, white grains of sand are sprinkled in your windblown hair. We're lying on a boat, a bit seasick and sun-drained, but content. Marco Island is foreign to me, but you feel like home. I knew I loved you long ago. (When the oyster shells still held pearls, and the salt was on another shore.) I look at you, and you mouth the words, *I love you*. Sitting on the back of a swaying boat, staring at a burnt sunset over the gulf.



TRACINGS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

steven tutino

FUNERAL WISHES

kailyn coslett

i can't afford to fly out to another funeral.
her slender, yellowing fingertips choke the
receiver 'til the cord is wrapped so tightly around
her index finger that i see the tip swell,
threatening to burst but she mutters--
flies, every last one of them,
and hangs up the phone.

this entire damn place is a graveyard.
she has me sort through the memoirs.
dead people's lives eternalized by a romance
with mothers dangling out of windows,
fathers coming home drunk and setting fire
to the christmas tree because
what's the point of living without a little
fire and the thrill of death?

her crinkled face sinks into the bed linens.
she wishes not for death but the blissful lack of
conscious before conception, before any
conceivment that one day there would be a woman
with a nicotine addiction that refuses to kill her.
why must the young die early while the old wish for death.
she prays, quietly, that tonight she might smoke her last
cigarette.

she slips her finger on the letter opener
to feel something besides impatience
but forgets how paper thin her
skin is.

dust settles on the covers of the memoirs in
this unlit room. their life's work,
their letters, their coffins.
she points to the one about the desert glass,
looks me dead in the eye and says
when i finally die you'd better write me one
like that.

she reminds me of the smell of tar,
the fossilization of dead flies plastered
to skipping stones in Ventura, and her
plea for death goes unanswered.
legs and wings trapped in the muck
and her eyes turn glassy before going
out.

her memoir begins:

*i thought i'd be the first to go,
with my ashy skin and yellowed nails,
ending in heart failure because of this
dependence on nicotine but instead
my address book's become an obituary.
throw parties at the graveyard because i'm
the only one left living.*

DISSOLUTION IS YELLOW

nora treatbaby

There is an echo inside of category. The essential value and pristine edgelessness of each in pure relationship. One is deposited by memory into the body of all things. Yet I remain in skin for the sun. This is the aporia of a flexure that seizes modernity's movement. I am surplus creature. I can walk around the world and compare myself to the art. I can produce "feel good" material. I can know myself through the dream synonym of statistical measurement. I can dissolve inside the room. I am allowed this. I can finger the breeze contingent that I stay at work in the development of ever new skin. But it is the most known quantity that each fever or river that enacts its murmuration as a gesture towards infinity creates a new center. Radiating away from, outward dragging with newness. The field is opened by centripetal arrangement, nothing freed, betweenness in everything. Category doesn't need to toil to worldbuild the Earth it commands. It is in our own practice to look the objects of the universe in the eyes and lower them to the level of a name. Every plant with its pronoun.



SUNSET

steven tutino



FADED

fabrice poussin

HELLO EARTH

nora treatbaby

I have driven to the edge of who
I can be (I am also a sphere)
and I am a woman. It's what
they tell you when
you tell them you are
not. They tell me the
architecture is for my own
good, that these clean
lines and high ceilings
will create finer and
more graceful movements
in the soul but I can't be
in here with all this normal air.
This new government is
signaling that the self
is the lawman now.
It's the norms that concern me.
Different slants pointed at
the same object. I step out
to consider why my transness
doesn't feel like a bird at all.
The norms change around
me as I change.
Is this proof there is
no sound of sound?
I am the type of woman
that feels a strong connection
to her body. The penalties and
the perfection. In the end,
to know oneself
isn't any kind of freedom.
If I unspooled you Earth I would
see that its lava's behavior that burns your
surface to its form.

AN ODE TO VINEGAR PIE

russell holbert

because I'm not done
talking about it!

To flies
(and shoofly)
and more specifically
flies with taste!

To garnished pay
and garnished plates
and let us garlands bring!

To paying together
(and mimosas when they're ready)
and switching between fork and pen...

This is a crucible—
infinitely dense
and thousands of degrees
(a trickle of sweat
in my cardigan):
hot—heat from
words, thoughts, pies
crammed in a
hipster aquarium
of comfort food
in breakfast form,

To the gentle nuance
of time well-spent
and the cart before the horse
and sugar before cream
and discovery before loss
and a toast before the wedding
and words before meaning...

To your indie film,
and my unfinished score,
and to God, who sucks
at keeping score—
God bless that fact...

...again, to garnish!
and Judy Garland,
and expectations as
missed communications

and anything I missed
while I finished my slice
of beautiful
vinegar
pie.



IMAGINARY MAP 3

fabio sassi

JOAN OF EVERYTHING

d. lupo

OK, I'll say it again: I'll tell you the truth. But only if you ask me about something I can tell you the truth about. One of the things I can't tell you the truth about is everything. If everything concerned you, I would tell you everything. But the cops couldn't wrest the rest of everything from me and, though I still love you more than anything, neither can you. I never said I love you more than everything after all.

The voice always told me it was necessary for me to be a prisoner. That's one reason why I set our landlord on fire. All prisoners have the right to be free. That's another reason. It was necessary for me to be a prisoner, that is, to feel like a wound my right to be free. And what better way to feel that right than to burn our landlord to the ground?

As you know, like the voice I hear that is everything, our landlord wasn't a human being. Our landlord was a corporation, that is, a bundle of swords with eyes dressed as a man. (I won't tell you whether the voice has eyes.) Another way of saying all prisoners have the right to be free is all corporations have a responsibility to be burned. Fire translates the language of earth into the language of air. It's difficult to burn down a corporation because corporations can mimic the language of air so well we forget they're built on earth. Doubly difficult when the corporation is a landlord that views other earth as monetizable air. I'm a good translator, I burned it down as easily as if it were a tree. But I can't translate everything after all.

There was a tree near Domrémy called the Ladies' Tree, or the Fairies' Tree. I heard that sick people would drink water from the fountain next to it to get better, then romp around it when they were well enough. I saw some people drink from it once, but I don't know if it cured them. It was a big tree, a beech. It gave them their fair May. Then a drug company got wind of the tree and moved its headquarters to the town, and you can guess what happened next, for corporations are among the worst novelists. So now people eat the ashes and dirt along with their pills and lick the dry fountain. I know it doesn't cure them.

The voice told me to put on a brave face for you. Here it is. I've already told you all you need to know about the voice. And I'd rather have you slit my throat than tell you everything I know. We've already established what your relationship to everything is. But here's some more.

There's light everywhere when I see the voice coming to me, as there should be. Not all the light comes to you alone! It's a dignified voice, soft and low, and it speaks in French. After hearing it three times I knew it was the voice of an angel. It's always protected me and I understand it well. Not a day goes by when I don't see the voice. I'd be dead without it. I wish you could see it too.

The voice is, for instance, everything after all prisons are abolished; all algorithms develop Alzheimer's; all falling trees sound as urgent as police sirens, now obsolete; all landlords are extinct; all genders rise up as incendiary saints.

I didn't get the idea to dress as a man from any man. My men's clothes are a small matter, the smallest. They aren't any more or less violent than yours. As for whether I want to be a man, I answered that question elsewhere. The answer is encrypted in a data bank in Poitiers. You could hack into it to find out, just as I hacked into the bank accounts of the landlord company executives and transferred all their money to their tenants. But you'd get a more accurate answer to that question if instead of hacking into the data bank you simply burned it down.

I set fire to our landlord wearing a white banner fringed with silk. It had a lily field and the world and two angels on one side and the words BELIEVING IS WEAVING on the other. I loved my banner even more than my bottle bomb. Forty times more. I never placed the banner or the bomb on an altar for good luck. I never prayed for them either. It never occurred to me that I could wish my armor good luck.

When I was little, around the time I started hearing the voice, I saw a painting in a museum of a figure in full armor lunging forward to present a letter to their king. It felt like the only image of myself I'd ever seen. Of course the voice was new to me back then so I never really understood what it was

saying, that is, I never really understood the world I was seeing. Years later I saw the painting again and realized what I thought was a letter was actually a dagger, the king a lover, the armor a shroud. Now I realize each element could be either of these things and many more. What the voice really wanted me to focus on—the real image of myself—was the lunging.

The people who want to throw me out of this world could just as well leave it before me. This is what I realized as I hid in the McDonald's bathroom while the building burned. I'm as certain of this as I'm certain you're reading this. There is no difference between leaving me to rot and leaving me everything. The building turned out to be empty but that doesn't mean the people who owned it didn't burn.

The last thing you said to me was, "Tell me the truth about everything." I won't tell you everything, but I am telling you the truth. Don't waste time asking questions about the truth of everything or the everythingness of truth. There are too many things left to burn.

When you asked me whether I loved the voice more than you I said, "Ask me again in fifteen days." Well now it's been eight and hopefully I've saved you the trouble of having to ask a question again, which I think is one definition of love. My answer to all your questions, including the ones you don't know how to ask, is:

The brightness comes in the name of the voice.

SOMEWHERE IN OKLAHOMA

jacob troia

with a warm star rising
with a gust in the grain
with not a whisper of worry in the wind

just time: passing with white

line

line

line

for a brief moment
I forgot

Way out,



KITE BOY AT DUSK

bukunmi oyewole

24 HOURS IN SAN JUAN

jennifer dines

An hour before the bad news, my husband insisted on a selfie. We were up in the tower of the Castillo de San Cristóbal, a 500 year old fortress in San Juan, Puerto Rico. There are gray stone walls behind us. I'm playing look out, and David is smiling so broadly that he has deep laugh lines. It's the last photo in which we are genuinely happy. It's the image preceding tragedy.

Tragedy arrived via a phone call from our neighbors back in Boston.

"Jenn, the police have come by a bunch of times. It's something about my father."

"Whatever it is, it won't be good," I stated flatly, though at this point it was only a hypothesis.

We learned that Robert, David's father, had died. He had been found dead in his bed by a neighbor in the Northern Oregon trailer park where he lived.

David relayed this to me with a measured, even voice. But, when he stopped talking, his face crimped up, the flesh on his chin winding itself into a wormy crumple. Streams of tears ran down his reddening cheeks, and drops dripped onto his white cotton t-shirt.

I sat up straighter, took a deep breath, and attempted to hug him. But my arms would only extend straight out. They moved stiffly and awkwardly, like a zombie. Pat, pat. There, there. I was a little repulsed by his crying, and then disgusted with my own lack of compassion. Still, I managed to pull his head to my shoulder for a few minutes before I became uncomfortably hot. I pulled away to fetch our cool bottles of water from the refrigerator.

"We need to stay hydrated. It was a hot day," I informed him practically.

That night, David somehow slept soundly, but I fidgeted all night in the silent torture of insomnia. I couldn't stop thinking about Robert. How he arrived in Boston each April from the West Coast, just in time for his birthday. And he always showed some visible sign of struggle. His glasses were held together with a pin or he had brought only a single pair of worn pants or - one time - he was missing a front tooth. But we ignored these sign of neglect. Instead, we brought him to whatever music, movies, or museums he wanted to visit. And, when we returned back to the apartment at night, we drank his Stone Brewing IPA and listened to him yammer on about whatever dream he was chasing at the time - biking down from Oregon to Baja Mexicali, building guitars and basses, refurbishing a silver streamline trailer like the one he had seen in the John Steinbeck museum in Salinas, California.

I looked up the time of the sunrise on my phone and refreshed my e-mail again and again until that time came. When it did, I put on running clothes and sneakers, and I sprinted out into the Caribbean dawn, traversing the roads from Calle San Francisco up to the Castillo and then westwards to the Playa del Escambrón. As I ran, I watched the sea lap up against the eternal stone walls surrounding the fortified city.

My chest heaved. I cranked up Guns n' Roses on my phone and pushed myself to go even faster. I thought about the last time I saw Rob. It was June two years ago, and he had arrived with only four days notice. He said he had retired - triumphantly quitting his job as a maintenance man at a senior center and planning to live off of Social Security. He had planned to stay with us through October, but the arrangement lasted less than a week. He wasn't eating, wasn't sleeping. He was pacing the floors at night.

He picked a fight with one of our neighbors, believing she had purposefully left the basement door open while he was working on his bike. He was under the impression that my daughters' kitchen set was dangerous, and he hacked it a part with an ax and dumped the pieces in the trash. This greatly upset our baby-sitter, who'd had nary a complaint during her three years with us. And when we tried to talk to him about these incidents over dinner, he blew up at us.

"I'm your ELDER! You need to RESPECT ME! Is some IMMIGRANT NANNY more important than FAMILY? FUCK!"

Rob rose up from the table, threw down his chair, and ran out of the house, taking down a baby gate in his wake. He returned a few hours later, pounding on the door and screaming.

The next morning, we sat him down and told him that he would need to leave.

Now, I was pounding the pavement. Every step was a complete fit of rage. I wanted to shake the Earth. And then, I was halted. On a wall perpendicular to the sea was an enormous mural of an octopus. It had to be paint, but it looked like pen and ink. Or like a tattoo. Yet it seemed so real. Its weird eye stared right at me. A flexed tentacle was curled, ready to give a punch. I couldn't catch my breath. I stared right into that eye and gave that mollusk a kick so hard that I felt a vibration through my entire body, a bell that had been rung with a mighty hammer. I heard a roll of thunder in the distance. The clouds were pregnant with rain. I turned back the way I came, rushing to the apartment to beat an early morning storm.

Later that morning, David and I went to the *Museo de las Americas*. On any other day, we would be flirting, whispering, giggling. But on this day, we could barely talk to one another. Yet there was a comfort. an unforced honesty, in holding hands and walking through the exhibits. We came upon the African heritage exhibit. David moved on after a few minutes, but I was entranced by a blood-colored mask. This headpiece had two trilliant eyes and a pyramidal nostril-less nose. From the scalp and sides of the face protruded five spiny horns. Uneven teeth emerged from the lips of a piscatorial mouth. A plaque informed me that this demon - a *vejigante* - was used in the 17th century to scare people into regularly attending church services. At that moment, my memory revised itself - it wasn't *we* who had kicked Rob out that morning. It was *me*. While David prepared eggs and fruit salad for the girls in the kitchen, I chewed him out in the living room.

"I can't DEAL with this, Rob. I have three babies. I'm a full-time teacher, and I need my ROUTINES. It's ENOUGH without worrying about what YOU'LL do next."

I had been a monster. No wonder I liked that mask so much. It looked just like me.

Later, after lunch in a bookstore café, we headed to the *Museo del Arte de Puerto Rico*. On the walk through the cobblestone streets, we held hands again. But, unbeknownst to Dave, I dug my feet into the pavement with every step, curling my toes, curving my arches like talons.

The museum was spacious and airy, comprising several floors, each with myriad galleries. David paused at each piece we encountered in regular intervals, while I lingered on one thing for a bit and skipped over a few others. Eventually, we became separated. From a distant gallery, I heard a guttural chorus of voices. I followed the sound, which became accompanied by a fierce beating of drums, accented by piercing horns.

The source of the music turned out to be an installation of an old-fashioned barber shop. It had a black and white checkerboard floor, hub caps hanging on the walls, black and white portraits of mustachioed men - one of them I recognized as Fidel Castro. There were three red velvet barber chairs, and, atop the middle chair was a tv monitor. It was playing shots of a *carnival* parade. On the screen, there were shots of a man, shirtless, tattoos covering his entire back, He was carrying a Burmese python on his shoulders, strutting down the street to the beat of the music, drinking a *Medalla* beer.

I noticed a sign with the title of the installation. *En la barbería, no se llora*. No crying permitted in the barbershop.

I remembered - after I kicked Rob out, David told me that he might not love me anymore. I raced off to find him. To tell him I loved him, to embrace him. I would bring him back to the barbershop, ask him if he still loved me, in a place where it was forbidden to cry.

oh holy meteorite
calming invisible waters
in space we have yet to claim
grant me the indifference
to arc in the air and
plummet onto a family's established perimeter
foiling any sense of a future
may your radiation fortify my skeleton
to puncture the incline offering the most prized
view of civilization simmering
no hoax convinces us of your absence
stickers on foreheads
slogans on farmed animals
where your dust falls
I leave my outline
a tableau for forensics
how did the pigment of my skin come to be?
7% charcoal
19% human oils
23% fresh asphalt
51% of questionable origin
possible celestial shadow



CONTORTIONS IN BLUE

jonathan fischer

MIDDLE GENERATIONS: ON READING KEATS, THE DEPUTY CHIEF MEDIC DELETES A LOVE LETTER FROM THE GEOLOGIST, A PAST SWEETHEART

t.d. walker

"And stars are anything but constant. They sometimes explode, and I don't want that kind of love, thank you very much. Please keep mine as solid as a rock." -- Dr. Pamela Gay, *Astronomy Cast*, episode 520 "Transients: What They Are and Why They Matter, Part 2"

What were you thinking about that morning
when you told me you wondered if we
had become if not a star then a body
lovers on other planets had taken as a sign?
Still in bed, you worried we were breaking apart
solid loves, holding together lovers who should have
parted. I said we're too small, too fast to be visible.
You knew that. We're not a star, not even star-like.
It's like when, on Earth, someone proposed
stripping Venus of its clouds, its luminosity.
Pushing it into an Earth-like solar day. Maybe
no one would think of it as a lover's star then.
We tend to think of everything as bodies, don't we?
You as human. Me as rocks in space, and even they
fall apart.

*or else
to hear
unrest, awake
to feel its fall and swell
ripening
stedfast, still
upon
gazing: the mask
human,
moving,
patient.
apart
not lone,
bright star--*

Phrases in the right column were taken from John Keats' "Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art"

POEM FOR MY MOTHER WHO JUST GOT HOME FROM WORK

isabel estrada lugo

You are reading the translated version of this
which won't be the same.

Waiting for you to finish each line, I remember
that poetry wasn't on the GED,

that there were only so many words you could teach me
those years in the mobile home

that you remember so sadly. Before furniture
and English class, we knew nothing but

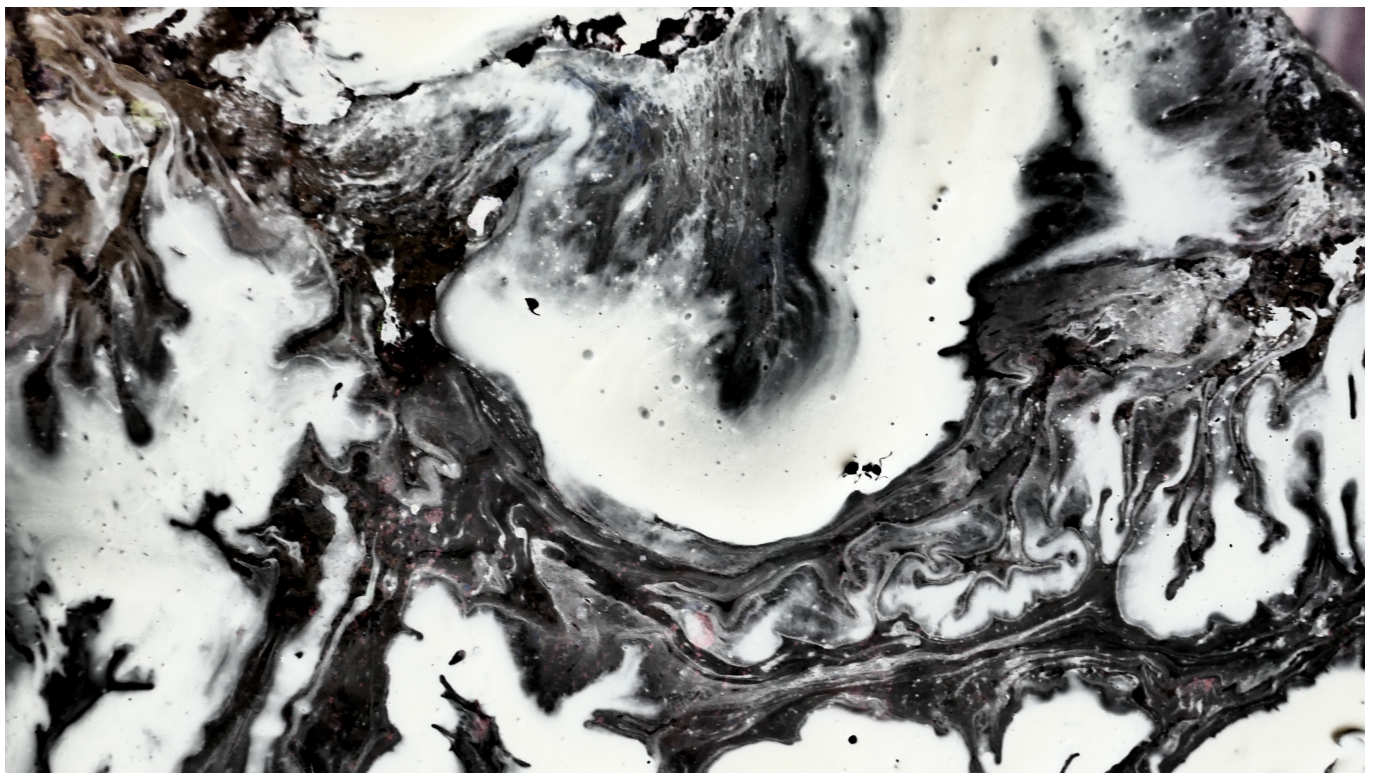
sitting on the rough carpet, tugging at the
syllables of *Goodnight Moon*.

But when you were younger and
knew everything, there were barely

parts of the bull you didn't eat.
Heart. Testicles. Ears. Nothing

gone to waste. Ran home from school
to eat the part of the stomach that

looked like a book. Said it could fit into
my palm. I dream this always.
And there's nothing I don't see.



HER MILKY WAYS

fabrice poussin

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