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### GOING BACK THROUGH

Cassandra Rae Lee

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GOING BACK THROUGH

by

CASSANDRA RAE LEE

B.A. University of Colorado at Boulder, May 2012

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Masters in Fine Arts in Poetry

University of Montana at Missoula, May 2021

Approved By:

Scott Whittenburg, Dean of the Graduate School

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Keetje Kuipers, Co-Chair, Department of Creative Writing

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Going Back Through

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Abstract:

These are poems from between 2018 and 2021 during which time the author continuously sought out romance, rearranged furniture, and adopted animals. Amidst this unresolve, primary preoccupations were closeness, what we accrue + conceal, and the forces that guide poems into arrangement. Secondary preoccupations were dust, amnesia, distraction, conduits, and the seething junction of forces where contradiction can be held.

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## Monolog dla Kasandry

after Wisława Szymborska

It's me, Cassandra.

And this is my city under ashes.  
And this is my walking stick and its prophetic ribbons.  
And this is my head full of doubt.

It's a true statement.  
My truth until the moon hit the sky.  
Only prophets who got down to business badly  
get to see such scenery.

And everything could come true so quickly,  
The whole kit & caboodle  
As if they were never there.

I recall myself so distinctly these days,  
How people, seeing me, were half silent.

Laughter hooked the air.  
Their hands lit on fire.  
The young ones ran to their mothers.  
I didn't even know their temporary names.

And this song is about the green leaflet.  
No one finished it alongside me.

I loved them truly.  
Nevertheless I loved them with height.  
Life is like that.

From the future. Where it's always empty  
And how is it easier to see death?

I wish my voice was hard.

Look at yourself in the stars — I cried  
Look at yourself from the stars.

They heard and sent their eyes down the drain  
They were consumed with living.  
Under a strong wind.  
Doomed since birth in farewell bodies.  
But there was some wet hope in them,  
The flame filling with its own flickering.

If only they knew what time contained,  
Or at least one of them  
Before —  
It was my line.

Only nothing follows from that.

And this is my rag charred with fire.  
And this is my prophetic clutter.  
And this is my somewhat twisted face.  
Face which doesn't know the mark it leaves.

**[not hypervigilant but multidirectional looking]**

i've been studying walking through  
grass just me and the birds thinking  
i should have bear spray  
my whole life

i disposed of a photograph  
i wanted no-one to see  
a real printed out film photo  
ripped up in fourths and fifths  
then lit the most incriminating  
bits on fire then dropped them  
in a bowl to burn like a movie  
the carcinogens  
straight up my nostrils

i'm beginning to realize  
my capacity for input  
is notable, ultra-saturated  
i can soak up  
a lot

i mean i'll listen to 5 radio programs  
in a row once i get going  
one in the bath  
one in the bed  
one in the yard  
one on a walk  
then listen to my favorite one again  
to hear that part where i want  
words to be sinews

now that i am no longer 'young'  
my finest chance to stand out  
is to blend in. Will said  
i have a special way  
of disappearing  
into what i am looking at



i told him i hold my breath  
the whole time

once on a canoe trip down the green  
i went with a friend's family and her parents  
were so eager. they said i could really be ugly  
when i wanted— they meant i could make  
myself ugly — they were right. that was  
the first time i saw someone use the dirt method  
to wash dishes with dirt — it truly works  
that was the first time i strong armed  
a team effort and willed us to capsize  
shined at cut-the-lines and self-rescue

so silenced by immense rock walls  
so disturbed by the seeming lack of texture  
in outdoors gear, by the passion  
i developed for week's old pasta salad  
by my own embarrassment seeping out  
of the dry-bags, i was lucky to be there

willow holding the shoreline  
is called wattle  
it doesn't always have to be  
a masterpiece just  
take a stab at  
just take a little stab at it

we have to really search out  
what stitches us, now

i'm beginning to realize  
high desert high art is  
attractive but best  
not to go all in  
i mean intellectual  
nature bitch  
that can get along  
in a horse town

it's true but not quite  
true

wind river heart palpitations  
twitching backcountry eyelashes  
frozen cold, rock climbing hands  
i don't rock climb but i basically do  
because i could repel down  
the bighorn. bonfire hair absolutely  
distilled stars. yes there was  
country music, yes i could go back

but it's none of that

i think R helped me see  
it's high altitude bones  
that get out of whack without  
pressure

where is my voice, my voices  
where is my voices

please, can someone

no, i have to find

we really do maintain  
the mainline of our presence  
our predominant interests

like i know i will be 77 and going on  
about the same preoccupations still  
so determined

if you want to know what i mean  
watch the poet whose words pelt you  
most deeply repeat the same story  
word-for-word another celestial telecast  
i listen on repeat

**20 april 2021**

cold out, huh?  
federal judge says it's not

a poster says  
form follows foreplay  
and so i agree

that feeling when you see another poster  
shaped just like yours

you're going to want to make meaning

i don't blame you. i want meaning, too

all the time

but i encourage you to  
let it  
sneak in. i pledge allegiance

to my age  
and location

i pledge allegiance to my phone  
that works so hard for me  
no i don't / yes i do

i bathe a rock from the yard  
in rose water. the rock has  
rings in it

the smells of this day  
are malt and fried chickens  
diesel  
and i am tired

for taurus season  
so tired is everyone?  
our fence wobbles

i love to share a fence  
with neighbors  
we're lucky we get along

a tight ship means not taking on  
too much water, not sinking

i was wrong. a tight ship has  
tight ropes  
the crew works well together  
stern instructions  
and repercussions  
but, yes, well-caulked seams

a tight ass is  
straightlaced, rigid, and  
inhibited

i googled the emotional significance  
of hemorrhoids several times

right, well yea, so  
fences don't work  
they're fake we just agree to forget that

same with houses

my illusion of privacy was punctured by

evan. his puppy pierre needed a place to pee

then a bigger dog from down the street with a man chasing after

i offered to lend them a leash. a hobo spider

a guy that let himself in through the gate and was squatting

then inside a bumblebee that kept bumping into lightbulbs  
then a wasp in the sill of the bedroom i almost forgot about  
but finally they crawled onto my piece of paper  
and allowed me to carry them out

[refigure]

can I lend my patterns of voice they are to rivers  
not fountains they have assets they do not want  
they want not to be possessed I am swollen  
with garbage didn't get gray hair until five  
came at once on my birthday you sink and bob  
like a bob a bisexual haircut, a lob was bob gay?  
no, he was bisexual I cut your hair when I wanted  
to cut mine she loves the line *hurl and gliding*  
*rebuffed, the big wind* the penmanship  
I like the note more than I like the poem  
you're allowed that what I saw was a flat picture  
of you, online I told you *I'm tired of not knowing you*  
but you weren't the first person I was tired of  
not knowing, were you? it took me this long  
dick's a well-read man with so many experiences  
and it's not that he doesn't like people he does  
I went to the gas station to get quarters for laundry  
to know what I don't have to worry about  
oh the thing I need help with is touch  
in the daylight this is slow I need  
language to start working the sensational  
both miette and jenna recommend you lightly  
disturb someone are disturbed yourself  
then blindfold them introduce various objects  
it's around this age we begin to recall  
to remember its purpose to help you  
to do what you already know how to do  
now, what is it I'm talking about that you  
already know how to do lemme do you a song  
make it clear what I mean I give you my  
receiving have you played the game *who's right?*  
when I was five I didn't want to eat  
a piece of jerky got spanked for hiding it  
didn't want to say I didn't want it

[what is horny and ethical when the person you're writing to can't speak back]

she says distance from the flame  
gives you space in which to position  
the poem which is good because  
you live exactly 100 miles from here

we both want what you call vacation lovers  
we only see not so often, those we're less  
intensely in touch with. mustard tint

with vegetables falling. a video  
you record using the 'county fair' filter  
purple garlic yukon gold potatoes and onions  
i say 'i'm feeling your striped shirt and glasses  
and gum chewing' but that's just a picnic way

to say i'm wearing sorel snow boots inside  
at the table to feel like i went somewhere  
a few feet away from where i straddled you  
to cut your hair which is cutting my hair  
but a stunt double, tresses dyed grey

like your eyes. how i make a birdbath with grease  
and water on cloth — carrier oil then tea tree and blue  
tansy, running it over. how do you describe  
those delicate folds at the crook of an armpit

you asked me to sit on your chest and slam down  
i would greet you that way every day if i could  
if you wanted me to. you tell me i am 'so  
fucking femme and sexy with AI bunny filters'  
such an easy way to get dressed up

that book with the page  
where a cartoon man lifts his skin  
and looks under, asking *how much*  
*of me is me*. i wish you were with me  
but we're too tired, i've never caught up

what is love without friction how do i  
make sure this letter is to you and not me  
these faded panties have been

wet. when we were fooling around  
i fucked up big-time like taking the pedestal out  
from under myself for you. i am the type of fluke  
that grew barbs when fish tried to eat me

after one week, cut tulips open to six-pointed  
soft edges and there's no more secret left now  
i do not imagine inside because  
i can look at it directly

so, yes, my love note is posting a screenshot  
of the weather app to which i've added  
your town, more north than me  
but further below zero

## must be common on the hips in february

the internet doesn't even work anymore —  
it's being at a mall with every single thing you don't need  
so i've elected to wear all black and be covered in hair.  
my obsession is women saving the cats of montana  
on facebook. my goal is to like every single one of their posts.  
spay and neuter task force, *yeah i have an adult ragdoll*  
a voice memo from someone i've never met, correcting me  
*lynx point* not siamese-tabby mix. i've been to  
some of their houses. i thought ppl knew i was joking  
about cats but the joke is serious because it's real.  
chronic caregiving at the expense of your own needs  
but the songs you accidentally sing to calm them down  
and easy company. though, sylvie would eat me  
before i was dead. she punctured the bone broth carton so it flowed  
like a fountain. a fancy question about the axis of i and thou  
to which the speaker answers *oh, i don't know, that was a long time ago.*  
it's about relationship, it's about *me* and *you* and if this thing will work  
(to date a pair of lovers powered entirely by vengeance like petrol  
or tantrum). really i don't wanna eat mushrooms and look inside  
i wanna eat mushrooms and watch a video called 'my huge original  
polly pocket collection'. i guess i do wanna look inside — a compact seashell  
you open up and there's a plastic diorama, the schoolhouse or a slumber party.  
and also my mom has planned on visiting without telling me. i sold my couch  
without telling her, where will she sleep? we might run through the old  
*if you don't work, you'll starve.* i only recently learned to listen and  
the pattern's still weak (i wrote about this day and it came). i reckon  
i need an undertaking i can't look away from and limitations. i reckon  
we make our best poems when we're a certain kind of young and  
i missed it. maybe i'm not the type to finish anything at all (*please no*).



**[I haven't filed my taxes]**

It's not a matter of thinking about it  
it's a matter of getting it done  
but I can't figure out what contraction  
I must release in order to do so

I'm dating a guy named Charles and  
the therapist I work with is Chuck  
and N calls sharing your feelings  
chundering. I think I can keep that straight  
I have so far. You know when you find out  
what yes feels like and realize everything  
you thought was yes was actually maybe

I mean desire but also that feeling of  
I want to do anything with this person  
like I will finally get over my fear  
of butt stuff because this person  
wants to stick things up my butt

The petulant teen side of me  
what does she/they want?  
Money I can choose  
to submit to  
snow in the winter, a tree branch to snap off  
and land on the roof then gently tumble  
down (which did happen during the windstorm)

No, not really. I want an Italian, pewter matchbox  
to take matches out of when I light candles  
or a silver-plated, Edwardian-style pillbox  
to take my pills out of when I take them

N asks 'why is your heart beating so fast'  
instead of just telling me it's beating fast  
and I say 'because ... in order to fit into what's  
required of me'. That's the sick humor of it —

our inability isn't real but there's pills for it  
which, offbrand, are \$2 with healthcare  
and \$54 without, plus \$300 for the Rx

I keep going to the Montana Antique Mall  
they call me Sir when I walk in which I'm getting  
accustomed to. I sold a bunch of things online  
then used cash to buy a cabinet. I want to buy  
a print of a communist woman with thick wrists  
and a handful of wheat in each fist but I can't

Usually I have to use the bathroom by the 2nd floor  
on account of taking in all the residue of old things —  
you can look at everything or look for something in particular which gives  
purpose. When someone in the groupchat asks for 'contemporary artists  
who you think are exemplary in what you are describing' the best answers  
are 1) what I'm asking for is something I haven't seen yet and 2) dolphins

Anyway when I get to the 4th floor of the antique mall I am too full of residue  
to keep going but I don't like not finishing the job (I like not starting the job)  
so I keep looking at all the things in every stall and meet the man that runs  
the one stall in the corner with the Persian rugs and good wooden boxes  
He has the gray ponytail of a tall, lanky man though he is shorter and heavyset  
I like to visit this stall because this man understands patina. I tell him that  
and ask 'how long have you been doing this?' and it feels like the moment  
in a documentary when the subject is about to say the most alive thing

He scans the objects in his stall and sees what he's looking for —  
a ceramic, painted camel the size of a person's head and he picks it up  
and walks closer to me and says 'since I was 9' and I say 'who taught you?'  
and he says 'my grandmother' and I say 'what did she teach you?'  
and he says 'when my brothers and I went over to her house and started  
roughhousing we shattered two art deco dogs she had on her shelf  
within about 30 seconds, just shattered and our grandma gestured down  
to all the pieces and said 'these are just things, but you boys, you boys  
are my treasures'. I wanted to ask him more good questions but  
I didn't have enough for more real intimacy plus even with a mask  
you shouldn't stay in a building too long

## **Outlast the Windflower**

Remember that sea-mother stands for  
'seem other'. All Greece reviles the wan face  
when she smiles. It was not that she was good-looking  
it was that the smoke cleared. The beauty of  
culvert feet. Big bones as in cadaverous  
as in body. What bitter thing is this?

The pre-school has a sign in the window called  
'goodbye window' where you (we) stand & wave.  
What happens when animal traps man? Cloves  
as in cloven, shepherd's pie as in ground-down deer  
I won't not say antler: heavy eye-sprout, heavy knob  
horn, rack, spike — the lowest forward-pointing  
branch. When will you leave me (us) quite?

In some circles speech is song-swept  
think of all we whistled. The whistles  
move with us. I can't sing but I can whistle  
steps on the mountain-slope. A deer asked  
a spider what she was weaving & why  
all the lines looked like symbols. A doe  
wouldn't trap a man into marriage  
because then she would be married to him  
as the arrows fell.

## **Blooms Visible in Satellite Imagery**

I saw myself  
pulling sludge out  
of my stomach  
only my stomach  
was the domed window  
of a washing machine

I was supposed to reach  
my hand in  
and dredge out  
muck. The long strands  
between my fingers  
as I pulled.

People love hair  
until it comes loose, then it's dead seaweed  
and it fouls things. I remember in June  
the news announced too much Sargassum

*Nobody will explain  
why a part of the ocean  
that was once seaweed-free  
is now rife with Sargassum*

an assault  
because the weeds  
had taken on stink and were trapping  
sea turtles

I knew the stinking strands  
weren't all mine  
but I couldn't bury them in soil  
because  
that counted as hiding—

I had to dry them  
in the sun

**Let the prince become herself all over**

let the teenage boy be shaky

*who has plowed my field*

let the puppet bird wear striped tights

*who has plowed my field without asking*

let the troll hair extend in many directions

*who has sheared the tops of my grain*

let the urges pass through you

*beheaded tops of my wheat, i could not protect it*

let the invitations be scarce

*because it was nighttime and i was made to be elsewhere*

let the 5G radiation be offset with listening

*it can't have been dumuzi*

let there be slack for gamers

*i bathed for the wild bull*

let the prince become herself all over

*i perfumed my sides with ointment*

i will decree a sweet fate for him

**[they make plans]**

to absorb imagined sounds  
of the frontier. i thought it was spindrift  
speak to the wind spaghetti westerns  
elk in the red sauce. i thought it was  
violent echoes, newfangled coal and oil  
only dried out through the windows  
the point is to empty completely  
who am i without looking for that place  
where points conjoin. it was a poem  
near the middle of the book  
that needed its picture taken. the one with  
curt, gray hair — calls herself a magpie  
gave me this book then asked for it back  
then gave me this book again. you could say  
it was a gift.

**[Subject matter]**

My father talks about  
the first time  
his family could go  
to the Dairy Queen. How delirious  
the food made them  
the off-brand shoes they wore  
the way all of us relate  
sometimes

inheritance

a series  
of over-corrections. Like driving  
on black ice. Or being dug, stripped,  
malled, drenched, and  
layered over.

I've heard it pointed out  
that saying 'pop' not 'soda'  
allows one to celebrate  
the sound  
instead of the equation.

How

*the air appeared*

*to give me answers*

*and a dialogue emerged*

*in which I remain*

How I've never seen the specter  
that follows me  
but know what it feels like  
when she's in the room.

## **Ecstress in Midheaven**

[October 7th an attempt to tell the truth]

Our shirts are too small for us.  
I mean the ways we together  
can't fit ourselves into them.  
Can't fit big naked hearts  
into old, tight shirts.

In the space surrounding  
planet Earth — 13,000 objects  
being tracked by the Space  
Surveillance Network.

At this point, we should all  
base our horoscopes on  
the Int'l Space Station  
and abandoned orbital debris:  
Nose cone shrouds, hatch covers,  
deployed rocket bodies, human waste,  
the glove lost by astronaut Ed White.  
The nature of these remnants  
shape your existing ways.

I didn't think of that, you did. You didn't  
think of that, I did. One of us  
thought of it, one of us  
wrote it down. Such a heap  
we were born under.

We won't measure  
paint flecks or plastic bits because  
they are not surprising. We won't  
count nuts or bolts unless  
they exceed four inches.

More space than I have  
on my harddrive. I mean  
I stayed up until 4am



and downloaded all  
our text message history.  
It was 637 pages  
which is 340.7 megabytes.

I want to give and give.  
I talked more than you  
when we texted. I didn't  
wait and listen. I wanted to  
listen to so badly but wanted you  
to hear me, more. Now I go back  
and wonder what you would've said  
if I hadn't interrupted.

You didn't give me too much  
just like I don't give too much  
to most people. Only a couple  
at a time, and I give them  
everything. I gave you all of it  
which you didn't ask for but  
didn't refuse. I entertained you.  
I went and got a frame  
for a big map depicting the geology  
of so-called Wyoming  
the geology keeps  
expanding and expanding  
into itself the more you  
drive around in it.  
I got 80% off a custom frame  
at a box-store and  
felt like a thrifty  
nickel. There wasn't  
more wall on which  
to hang things but  
I didn't think about that  
because I wanted this.

We texted and texted  
like the hole in you

that you smoked into.  
I had forgotten about that  
at least you craved me  
and would keep  
coming back, though  
you could really take it or leave it.

Twice at least I cried  
your tears for you  
out of my eyes and then  
I knew your pain precisely  
and knew it was loss.

[d i f f u s e r]

*wide sweeping motions, tapping*

tall-growing grass flowers  
being blurry blurred blurred blurred  
starts to sound like blood  
vapor  
move  
move move

i'm just wondering if it has to do with

another statement in reference to [that painting]

fireweed [great willowherb] tends to love [disturbed places] first opener [after forest fires]

common along the overthrust

the stigma is cleft in four long lobes

cedar [what a name] running along the highway with her cowdog

i crunch my candy [butterscotch]

tommy would've traded for the strawberry

maybe i'll add *ly*

to my partner's last name [when I choose one]

i want a better last name

carlos calls me

mrs. slowcooker

slowcookerly

lying down in the grass

rosettes

bright leather

*touch the leather*

*touch the leather, leather*

light plum purple orange

hint of

purfle [forward + thread]

a feather

*gutsy, swinging, slick, old-time*

i left a candle burning  
on my altar for shirley  
[an excuse to go home]

name of myth  
and name of household appliance  
diffuser is the password

*sweeping motions, symmetry*

my urge to own  
a love of grass  
older than grass  
a dance  
older than grass  
i want to learn it  
can I borrow

no

but recounting

the dream from last week

i found the girl from my dream

not like dreamgirl, but a girl

i meet in my dream. she has short

blue hair now and black lipstick

she comes right over. i'm sitting

on the floor in front of a portrait

of a man dancing in the grass

she stands very close to me

in these rows of photographs

i stop my pen moving

*tell me if i'm in your way*

our eyes combine

and she says slowly

*no you're fine*

lands low in my right eardrum

a bit electric not like drumkicks

just like blue static

pooling

can i borrow

your grass book [ouch]

i don't like  
sharing. i'm a child  
an only child that's why  
i like grass so much  
it waves  
as a family

*symmetry, mimic waving*

what does it do  
in the prairie besides  
hold everything  
together

someone puts stein in calligraphy

burden of grief  
mounting  
reddening

in the evening  
there is feeling  
pinching

curtains            bed line(n)s            circling

the round split rock now  
i can't remember where i got it [oh]  
i got it from the square  
of space around a tree  
in the sidewalk

the round, halved rock smells  
explosive  
[no] mint and strawberry  
now mint and strawberry

## **grandma shirley got me from a vending machine**

it was the kind with a claw  
she lifted me up w/ an iron jaw

cut open my mouth & pierced my ears  
& tenderly fed me her bottles of tears

i'm not as alive when she's not here  
she visits me, snuggles, but once a year

the dog called dozer chewed off my head  
they sewed it back on & sent me to bed

## examining my body under sunlight

a garland of scab      lifting      the center

the belonging      skin inflamed

seething      working in      animating flesh

other words for perfect:

crowning    consummate    downright    unadulterated

shall I bring some cream when I come by

shall I steam every surface how much

do we embody

what we embody

I mean do I act pathogen

do I dream the ringworm

does the ringworm dream me

what about

scraps      scum      sewage      shavings

surplus      the place to start soothing

the constant threat of spooking    baby

on stilts

how does one

forget

**[wax and dust]**

we are acting in your name hollow &  
alive, we are binding to you, we are  
sealing and doubly-sealing we have sealed  
with the signet ring. tongued the grey  
stone floor. the *nun* performative woe  
the fast-flying blast be struck by  
the membrane in your heart & many  
others now known whether far away  
or near. we adjure you every species  
of lilith and professor's tongue  
pebble-charms, inform the use of  
open space, deform the names of  
god, assume anyone would know  
the dangers we are running



**[Note]**

This is not collapsing under  
this is filling your oat sack  
for hell. This is not resignation this is insistent  
demand. This is not crumbling this is amorous  
destruction. Imagine convincing the guards  
to let you in. Your lover your godforsaken selves  
are down there.

## **[inventory]**

### **the conditions:**

we want the sea rose  
we want the poppy  
as stand-in, just like that!  
mechanical sunrise  
another way to say  
d a w n simulator

### **the aspects:**

stress causing overconfidence  
desire creating distance  
boredom enhancing burdens  
through tuesday through wednesday

### **the guidelines:**

no more than a cupboard-capsule  
no more than all of the books  
no more than an empty melon  
no more than a windhover  
no more than wind

### **the frameworks:**

constantly ticking refreshment of  
our hearts. completely shut up  
by particles. mediate ourselves  
to make the liquid saint-like  
two litres before before bed  
these violent kinds of water  
we rub underwear on

### **the resources:**

will want to find their way to you  
not quite snail mucus on your skin  
more like soil arranged on the floor  
exactly one inflection point  
and deep-lurking later on pain

**the affordances:**

you say eff-ah-meeral not ephemeral  
you say hi-there-toe not hitherto  
you say you are excitable  
you say you are to be kept  
in the refrigerator

**the enemies:**

call jen on friday  
email jon, email everyone  
appeal the ticket  
become a past time  
a poor connection, a bad link  
as far as the birds are concerned

**the approaches:**

try sleeping better last night  
try cooling-the-palette tea & ibuprofen  
try cervical steams  
try anne carson or lisa robertson  
try protecting your questions  
try never leaving the agora  
try looping the field  
try the buffalo gap  
try niobrara, nebraska

**the questions:**

who will screenshot your private life?  
were there any bits you liked?

**a ring is named after**

whatever it pierces: nipple, nose, tongue

a doublet of chance truly an act of

falling how does it feel when they say

a ring is made of lone/loan translation

things change before we perceive them

labret studs, cyber bites, anti-eyebrows

mostly I used to be bad and cannot guess

the caliper — how I am being bad now

have you kissed each of your friends

a general sense of succession

rook, daith, conch, lobe

the bar and the ball (or the bead)

whose logic should lead the way

habit like your life depends on it

## My batteries are flat in winter

the influenza a forced reset  
how much elderberry spritz  
now I'm watching a lesbian storyline  
set in farming country, Northern France  
the bread and lyrics:

you make me electricity  
you raise my tension  
to not fall into the lust  
I'll have to pay attention

all flexible metaphors  
and everything else, the attempt  
always trying to fill

Something left  
there's just Something missing  
that special Something  
Something about it  
Sometimes we call the space Daniel  
Daniel Something  
Some Things About Daniel  
when Daniel has a child  
Daniel can say I've got a little Something

honestly I just need a microphone  
in my room of malady  
join us you'll love these transmissions  
from not that far off  
from Nowhere in particular  
now I'm watching a film  
based on the book *Orlando*

it's my last night feeling  
unwell enough to shirk duty  
my batteries flat entropy  
the gradual decline to disorder

why does the body need notions  
the most stable condition

now I'm feeling better than I have in years  
(always wanted to say that but  
didn't know I felt *that* bad)

now I'm headed to Dixon for brunch  
the old mercantile the good shapes  
as evidence of  
what we want to look at  
in texture, tracks and all  
others are more interested in principles  
of luxury and taste

she's a smart girl  
she has no flies on her

it's always like that  
we turn out badly  
and a tennis court is just a cage  
with snow in it

## lifetime radio host

that's what we all want  
to have our stuff match us  
or the other way around

figure out what the plants  
their individual personalities but feel  
not knowing their names

i'm like a level 7 botanist on a scale of 42

did someone say b o t a n i s t (swoon)

\*whispers\* botanist

wow robert duncan's partner was hot  
'painter and collagist'

jess collins had strong brows  
and his art?

if my supportive life-partner  
who will posthumously publish  
my life's work would  
come forward with trust

painting is so  
mushy to me.  
you need the trust.  
would you be interested  
in going to a place around polson for  
an oral history meeting with  
a potential narrator? i'm talking to  
a rancher on grindr. he is interested  
but i suspect, if a woman were there

i can be a woman!  
and am good with ranchers

i always set you up to be poetic  
it's not really fair

like behind every under-  
stated gemini

true  
you say it all

how *do* we fly the coop? i feel half  
on a good day

that's the question  
what are you half way in / out

i do things half because  
i want to step outside of  
and half because i want  
praise

it's balanced at least

i'm rounding

clouds to the south  
are exceptional  
south south west

i couldn't see them  
i wanted us to kiss  
in case it's helpful

(and the verb itself appears opening)

i felt several opportune moments  
but was sick  
and gross and unsure  
about where you stood  
i'm sure my body



language added to your hesitation  
i suppose

what do you make of  
the phenomenon  
of trying but failing  
to systematically remove  
the entire contents of all drawers?

does plastic age well?

it never dies

aging? try being made of plastic

we're just not used to it yet

a devastating tale of slow  
motion loss. like adding a bit of radon  
to your soup each day

i'm wondering if, in thinking  
that I've come to use  
the substance much less  
and in smaller doses  
i've sensitized my  
dopamine system?

highly likely  
and if you've sensitized  
your dopamine system  
what would that  
mean to *you*?

## **Dirt on My Boots Sonnet**

Love is a round-shaped building as you know  
I mean the way round shapes in architecture suit the psyche  
They encourage as much looking out as looking in, take less material  
withstand storms better. The water and wind just roll right off  
You like when I or anyone runs their hands through your hair  
I cut my nails short to signal I'm interested in everyone but also  
I like long nails to drag lightly across your scalp. I want the sighs  
to speak so thoroughly I want your whole body gone slack. You turn  
at the Town Pump in Florence, the homes are controlled by  
the Covenant, that's what the sign says and you point out the house  
you lived in with the Brady Bunch awning. When we pulled up  
you said the basement was messy but it wasn't even. It was cold and  
all divided into rooms with so many corners. I'm not in my right mind  
as you already are with your questions and empty shame compartments.  
I remember the noises Kairos the dog made down in his bed on the floor  
and the weight of your body sinking as we drifted to sleep by  
I would give you suction and you would be so soft with me

## Which could be bent to fit

[after Bernadette Mayer  
and Catullus]

Clodia, a married woman, was a false name  
for Lesbia. Lesbia was chosen as a match  
a metrical match. Did you know that Lesbia  
means wooded? Clodia (Lesbia) who were you &  
who are you today? I like them better than  
anyone else I've met that tolerates you —  
may I say? The open feel you were going for  
now store the rest. Car too cold — jump me?  
I have cables, I have time, we aren't the only ones.  
When I crouch into child, this cat pacifies  
my spine. Did you know the brain extends  
through the tip of the tail? I'm not the type  
to talk about her cat, though this cat talks  
with christmas cactus perhaps to coax a bloom  
& asks each antique about — the abject  
Cassandra, get back to the abject. Are you aroused  
by how the land was acquired? All you ever do  
is go back to ancestral comforts. Is it leisure or  
is it ease that is killing you? Clodia must have known  
of the lesser preoccupations with napkin-stealing  
urine, buggery & bad breath. One great way  
to try and stay awake is standing. I found  
the comfortable way to feel attached.

[This cafe opens at 5:30am for anyone cold from the night]

I keep wanting to curate a collection  
of scrunched napkins  
and my head aches  
from three glasses  
of white wine. I filled a whole mason jar  
of water for the bedside  
but didn't touch it

Judith Arizona is coming  
November 22nd  
so I look at every affordable cabin for rent  
in the state.  
I should really make time  
to see my parents,  
I wish I wanted to

And I haven't been touched  
for a month now, which  
doesn't seem like long  
but I'm spoiled. I like to say  
*spoilt*

I consider a text  
to that guy  
that looks a hell of a lot  
like Virginia Woolf  
and I wonder how I know  
what she looked like

*strange pleasure*  
*to be yelled at*  
I thought  
as he shouted  
*enjoy being 29!*

I couldn't stop pointing out to him  
his addictions. What I meant was

can somebody please hold me  
without stealing my energy. Side by side  
spring loaded legs of a clothespin  
I hold in my hand until sleep  
now I make the bed  
with the clothespin in it

## **It doesn't matter what I won't change**

Absence like text messages in mid-air

I wrote this on a plane last May

Who cares if you have gout    you have more in you    than anyone

I mean I matched with a Truck Driver on Tinder named Adrian  
and she waited outside the bowling alley to see if I was cute before committing to meeting me  
She wore an Adidas sweatsuit which made me feel I was finally dating for leisure  
I thought maybe she smelled like weed which was confirmed a few hours later  
when we went back to the AirBnB  
and smoked with my mom and typed in songs on YouTube by all our favorite singers

The day before I went on a date with Chapter, long-haired and butch, very attractive  
she picked me up in an Audi with polished paint, it was so clean inside and she drove me  
out to an island to watch the sunset and as we stopped for a deer to cross  
she told me her mom had just survived a brain aneurysm i.e. she was on this date  
to get a break from the hospital

we ate an expensive dinner I had some kind of roasted vegetables  
she pointed out that I was resting my breasts on the table but I was only leaning in  
to hear her better, seemed to believe she already knew the type of person I was

My mom goes to bed early eating cinnamon candies on the couch so that's how  
I found the time to go on these dates, the most vivid part of the trip  
except for when my mom didn't know she was being racist in the taxi  
and told me I'm always looking for her to do something wrong  
so she can't relax around me

I went to Adrian's house in a Lyft, costed \$20 to get there and she kept the lights off  
for the most part and came out to the car and walked me inside, treated me like a lady  
She had a sheep dog with no name who was trained to salsa dance and has since been given away  
One of her rusty truck hitches leaned against the wall and I taught her a few stretches to help with knots  
in her back which was sore from all those years driving even though  
she's so young and when I guided her to the wall in her bedroom which had a TV really close  
to the end of the bed and a soft-fuzzy blanket in zebra's print she said 'watch out, there's a gun  
down there and it's loaded' I wasn't scared there were lots of guns in my house as a kid for hunting she  
subsumed me wrapped around me like vines

and together we took on a sort of Dryad quality

/// I guess, nobody minds because of adderall and Butterfly Herbs

I do — but I don't more so I'm rounding

I mean slouching

But also rounding up or rounding off

Ed Skoog says nobody has written the great round-off poem

I think of all the jars of dried herbs lined up on the walls in the shop on Higgins

And how they make you carry even the heavy ones over to dole out into baggies

You can tell which ones were gathered most recently because they're still alive inside

Why doesn't anybody demand we lie in the sun — a couple old goats living past their expiration dates

I mean on the way home from Detroit I stopped in Minneapolis to see my Dad's side of the family Norwegian Lutheran types that live very purely a lot of blonde hair and their houses smell good like candles from the mall and makes me want to say things I shouldn't out loud but the point is there are two goats out back named Otis and Flapjack when you put on boots to go feed them they greet you with corncob teeth smiling at the gate little black brown white beards so healthy

Seeing the Maple leaves from inside the house is lacking something

so there's Maple trees all around and the green leaves were filling the frame of all the big, glass windows and you can tap the syrup traditionally the syrup has a cleansing power this house isn't actually in Minneapolis it's in Maple Plain which is near Minnetonka and not too far from Mound which is named for a burial ground where my grandmother Vivian lives Vivian Lee is her name like the movie star my other grandparents were Lavern and Shirley I'm quite proud of that fact but it's all bound up in knots

## MT highway 69

Elkhorn John called me on the phone said he wants me to bring a group up and do a poetry reading in the old fraternity hall in the ghost town of which he's the mayor and they usually charge sixty bucks but he wants to read something he wrote to us so we can do it for free. I don't want to get that storyteller's look in my eyes about him and he's already been interviewed a bunch by some Czech filmmakers that happened on the town just like me.

He said I left quite an impression and all I can think of is a thumbprint pressed into clay and the way I keep seeking safe connections with men older than I am and the text message Tim sent me after a bottle of Chianti that said if he were 20 years younger I'd have to get a court order against him.

Soup from the co-op in Bozeman filled my floormat after I slammed on the breaks to snap a photo of a quilting shop called *Scissor Sisters*. I tried to use the windshield squeegee at a gas station to get the soup off the floormat — the blue cleaning liquid with potato and leek and I soaked some of it up with snow, too, until it was a blue soup snow slushy.

When I was preparing to leave for this trip I went for gas at the Conoco on Brooks in Missoula and while the pump was running I went into the casino and got a bottle of tequila but it was midday so I felt bad buying it. When I got back to the pump, I tried to drive off with the hose still attached and it ripped out but didn't spill any and the man at the pump next to mine said he'd tell the attendant since I was embarrassed. He had a good old truck and I almost doubted he would do anything nice for me with my short hair.

Inside the fraternity hall in the ghost town where the population is now six people, there used to be names written all over the walls. You know, a little boy would run in and look for where his grandfather wrote his name in 1957 but the kids from Boulder down the road came up and got a little carried away — I mean the kids wrote words on the wall in shit. Elkhorn John thought he could extend the hose over from his cabin and wash it off before anyone had to know but the government brought in about twenty cars and steam-cleaned, then got the job corps to paint it over.

What's the name for the soft squishy ground at the base of a fallen tree? It was huge and still alive when it fell and John should have ridden it like a bull to cut it up but he lost his cool and tossed the chainsaw and jumped off. We both love when the throat-coat tea starts clearing up phlegm and both feel down about how many artifacts have accumulated. I'm gonna come back in the spring to help him arrange it all better and maybe get rid of some stuff which might be what I'm good at in this body. All I have to give him from my car is an avocado and he gives me moldy raspberries and green grapes.



## **Breakup country**

Lots of of slips today

Hail storm as hell storm

Unstressed syllable as undressed syllable

Menstrual as men steal

I keep losing and finding service to call Judith Arizona

I always call an Aries when driving through fields

We joke as if we are character actors

Sever the bond bison breath

Unredeemable material

including

calling an established woman by her first name

Are you against or with punctuation we dash the landscape

reflective stripes on concrete dividers near Homestake become continuous yellow

These can all be beacons these can all be markers of distance

you don't need a photograph of your beacons you just need them to be there

to see where you are

This day and age means draining our oily bodies for the promise of

There's never any antelope in the antelope basin

I will keep saying bison and basin and antelope and elk until I understand why

Forestry students at Yale wear business suits to class (it's okay not to go there)

The decision to write down your determination is the main thing

like pulling over to take the picture on film (take, take, take)

'RIP Man' scrawled on a rock face

the rock faces are faces

What if I say who I mean when I say you

You Mark looking over my shoulder when I write in my phone's notepad  
when I really get going pretty and just enough edge to get a prescription

We went to get tested — you had to get pricked twice — I swabbed my insides  
then waited in room # 5 next to a large printed poster of a bugling bull elk that said  
'fatherhood - are you ready?'

We must sometimes be  
ecstatically identified

On the radio:

*Hannah would want to speak through me at this occasion  
it's hard for me to speak about her without feeling her*

Clairvoyance a moving forward

What happened when you called 411 in New York in the 70s (for example)  
Or the mood at Murdoch's in the silk scarf section when we found out that 5 hrs away  
Wade hit his leg on a stump and broke it

Remember Butte

I had forgotten all about it (again)

I start singing Dixie Chicks to myself around this time (room to make a big mistake)

My voice is not good for singing but singing is

Illustration of presence

That feeling again — something I really needed to forget

way before hitting my head on a rock at a party

rocks and ditches as part of the party

or reservoirs or bonfires or shotguns (for practice)

## Elegy for the inconsolable last word [I often fail to question admiration]

*I'm ready to come above ground* I tell a potential new landlord  
although — the slice I can see from the basement may be plenty  
lavender collecting flakes, snow and the legs of a mail person

We've had a sleepover forever since January 6th. That has to be  
a record even for married people — I almost scald my skin  
in the bathtub yesterday, it takes four days in a row to cross off

All the grooming:  
nails, cuticles, pores, shave or trim  
or tweeze everything in stages — I keep trying to assure you  
*you smell like milk* is a compliment

A relationship gone rancid if only one person's fears conduct  
the momentum — our arrangement of fragments  
is all we can do now in saying what's ours before  
the inconsolable last word

Blake asks *what do our animals process for us* (one hooks me w/  
talons and shatters mirrors, the other takes on infection)  
Blake says no matter how many times you ask an Aries  
*and where do you feel that in your body?* they won't feel it  
out of a preference for talking about what they might be feeling

This whole business of skywatching a way to kindly insult each other  
We promote ourselves with many lenses and never are — *How do you  
situate yourself?* I keep harping at students in my class, meanwhile  
they find a writer I love confounding, a Debbie Downer, then we critique  
Glacier National Park as carnival for depletion. Still, I'm trying to help myself  
hear rocks speak.

**[Pandemic beginning]**

It was acquisition I was studying this whole time

The detail of N licking my nose and leaving the smell of his breath on my septum ring

There is something in that smell I disagree with

I am gearing up for the long alone

If you have ever copied and pasted the same message to more than one person  
— then you need it, too

Don't tell me what to do

I am going to be very careful from now on

I am going to consider which patterns upset me

I am going to think about how many shirts my closet rod can hold

The closet rod shouldn't dip under the weight of its holding

What does it mean to be made of cheap / How can we measure

I gave Jason \$220 to build me a fence made of wire

The cats escaped immediately by going under

I filled the gap with bricks. It makes me ecstatic to move

heavy rocks around in the sunshine but we're meant to leave them

alone. The wind brings trash and while I pick it up I can see

gas station numbers glowing I don't know how much it is for one gallon

\$2.27. I can hear helicopters landing at the hospital two blocks away

I don't imagine a person on a ventilator, I imagine a car crash and flesh

Nurses in teal scrubs smoking outside on their break

We are ordered to shelter in place but I am addicted to furniture

I bought a table from a woman named Jane in Hamilton

Jane was wearing a pink sweatshirt with a painted horse on it, the word 'Morgans'

Nobody in Hamilton was staying home because they have horses to feed. Jane tells me  
the table is made from a single tree. That means this table used to be a tree in Vermont

We didn't shake hands but I gave her a check that I wrote on. It is a good time to invest  
in plexiglass or bitcoins. The glass is a window for viruses. I finally understand

what Cherry Glazerr means — you dissolve a half a cup of icing sugar in your saliva

then pop the cherries in, one by one, glazing them

I sort of hope this turns you on. Nobody will remember what you do

And if they do it will be about them not you. I call the bakery

order a cake that says 'quarantine'. Online, Stacy and Kimberly

stand next to a cactus. Kimberly wearing a shirt that says 'all surplus is immoral'

My underwear say 'jockey' with a red stripe and a blue stripe

My family doctor could only provide birth control or antibiotic prescriptions

I learned online how to prevent urinary tract infections — wear cotton underwear or better yet none

Ask a person to wash their hands before touching you. My dream is never to want a man to touch me

and I want to achieve it before I become unsexy. It seems like today is the day

when all of the roommates stuck at home sleep with one another though to assume people can be home  
to assume people are sexual is narrow-minded — I'm reminding myself. This is the time we have been waiting for  
A billionaire gave me thousands of dollars for graduate school very generously. He got his money  
by sneaking oil into apartheid South Africa and other atrocities before and after I was born  
I have \$7,000 left so I can't keep living this way for long unless I ask for more. I pretend he is my uncle  
and never make eye contact. Eye contact with anyone overwhelms me unless  
we are lovers. I matched with a film producer from LA on Tinder during the pandemic  
we both wondered what happened to all the bugs when the Insectarium closed down  
but he got fired and had to go back home, he didn't want to meet before he left. He would have found out  
I am generally unstable. Judith Arizona asks if she can share a fantasy and of course she can  
the point is that she asks. The fantasy might involve neck squeezing or a harness but what I mean  
by unstable is I won't take responsibility for myself, not yet. I did join a virtual dance party  
while washing all my dirty bowls, I wasn't embarrassed to be wearing dish gloves and no bra  
while one guy was riding an inflatable pair of lips in his rectangle. In her mind Blake was given the option  
to remove her disc full of memories. Telling people you have painful history is different  
than remembering it. She says grandmothers care if we are okay and aliens don't  
but they both mean well. In every group of conspiracy theories one person is telling the truth

**[last week it was what do I do]**

with the pee towels, the week  
before that it was what do I do  
with the pee quilt and the pee rug  
this week it's how the hell  
did pee get inside the crockpot  
under the lid, inside the cupboard  
every week it's where is the pee  
and how will I dispose of it

nothing in my house feels sacred  
nothing in it feels still or real  
sweet angry wind

someone posted a prompt  
to see what your browser will  
auto-fill and mine was:

my name is nobody (1973)  
and I am the witch of you always  
my special power is                   over 9000  
    made perfect in weakness  
and my magic is box poem

my magic keyboard is not working  
my magic mouse is lagging

we just had fireworks yesterday  
in july and now on new year's eve too  
enough it's too loud I don't want more  
of your rocket's red glare. I felt a little festive  
when the bombs were far away but now  
they're just across the river and my animals are  
and the chat will be dismantled for the night  
but the transmission will continue  
we'll be here and right on time 11:47pm  
Zachary Edminster pops in asks 'is it real'  
he asks 'is it real I like it'

this was a list of 'what I need'

(three) AAA batteries  
trashbags  
mouthwash  
whipping cream

and then when a famous novelist  
came to speak with a group of alleged poets  
and someone asked her about the way at the end  
of her book she devolves into a list and whether  
that was a conscious choice as the writer or  
if it just happened and the novelist became angry  
like how dare you call it a list not realizing that  
many poem-lovers hold lists in esteemed light

when I drove home to wyoming to help  
my parents move their hoarding from  
one house to the other (oh god)  
as I was driving over the mountain pass  
which connects an edge of so-called idaho to an edge of  
so-called wyoming it was nighttime (because i can  
never leave) and the moon was shining into  
the valley and my brain or heart associates this  
last steep downhill of the pass with boyfriends

when Kelly visited the valley I drew her a map  
and pointed to the bar at the bottom of the pass  
as the place where I meet my boyfriends

I didn't think I would write about this now  
I don't want to I'm not ready but maybe I can  
just say it shorthand like in order to avoid  
staying with my parents I stayed with boyfriends



2:59am — perpetually

it always is and nobody can sleep here because i want all four animals  
in bed with me and to lie spread-eagle

my ass a hill for small paws on top of blankets these warm, breathing, heavy lumps  
a sequence (i don't want to say constellation) where i can locate how i almost didn't  
write this down almost lost the way in, but then  
this light that shines straight through the blinds on the other side  
caverns. you're not the first person to say you wish you were one of my pets  
remember

the beginning of this plague the candor before it all began to add up?  
the little red velvet bench i got (from craigslist)  
the two plaster of paris columns that frame the monstera, i guess  
my skin got wetter as the summer did. my memory all screenshots of laptops now  
bank accounts that hover below zero because i only emphasize the prettiest  
the constant wire that stands there and drags me to the sink  
just a cup, the cutting board, just one knife

i want to stop arranging furniture so badly that i'm never quite right  
and keep adding things like too much salt, even now  
a wooden trunk from 1860 takes up the whole car the initials H G in there with no one  
to carry it inside. to empty everything. you wouldn't believe  
how much time i spent riding up the chairlift, skiing down

the case history i choose is peeing my pants on purpose in order to go home early  
(i sat in the snow like a bedding down moose). long, straw hair i carried around  
and pulled behind me like cobwebs  
if they're left in a carpet somewhere or just gone. i'm brave

in all the wrong places. arrows shooting out in all directions people suppose it's almost over,  
lockdown. but i'm keeping going indefinitely like the necromancer  
who had to stay in their domain to be easily found  
only first i need a place to never leave to never get to

i was told my best correspondence 'would come later'  
the tendency to defer is 'i will come back and feel that later'  
on discord, gina said 'swallow now, chew later'  
my practice pulling open the back door. stepping out  
in underwear and doing arm swings while the dog pees.

excerpt from *death*

after lorca

the rose, that quiet roar of light and screams  
lashed to the sugar inside its own trunk

what lucky little daggers get to watch over the night  
what skimpy little daggers, how uncabled  
the moon! how nude the skin  
always perpetual and rouged