

CutBank

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You

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Mark Levine

You

The screen goes blank. The thornbush on the blue
screen goes blank. A burning log drops
into the soggy peat. You: you can stop talking.

This whole production—costumes with silver stripes,
feathers, glue, wet tongues, skin
that looks like skin—you can stop it now.
The sawdust stage, the crooked red scaffolding.
You can practice stopping it.

Is anything moving in the dark? We close our eyes,
we listen to the fluttering sheets, the blue smoke—
Are we moving? With the darkness taken away,
can you move your legs? I can.

I would like to say something. The blue

thornbush has stopped speaking and burning.
The sun will not pass through the wet berries.
Men have set down their shovels
in flat lanes of cleared peat. The last
plane flies into the screen silently.

I would like to say the film was not allowed to end.
I throw up my hands: no scars.
No pictures fading across the flat lines

of my body, not even when we add
singed hair, a painted shirt.

On the white table I read the numbers printed on my pill.
On the white table I lie with my pill
beneath the light and the last remaining figures
in their white shoes. I listened

to your tape but could make out nothing
with the birds squawking in the background like
burning leaves. To see the drifting sheet—
coming down on the body
like a silent white bird with yellow eyes.
Coming down on the body like a body.