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from The Dottery

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KIRSTEN KASCHOCK

from *The Dottery*

I had forgotten laundried—hung out. The wet clean part did not excruciate, but then the sun would go and the whipping begin. Not froth, domination. Would we be taken in, or end as the wet unclean? There were no safety-words on the line. I wanted to pinch the clothespins from my clavicles, the little homunculi, and dig their two legs into the earth. An insert. It would feel good to, for once, punish. And there were the blessings, buoys, dipping in and out of our rows, our sails before storms, braving the involuntary red of our flap-and-thrash to seek what they sensed was hidden. We were dotters, underthings, and so were unable to help them, though in plain sight.

The designation “dotter” illustrates a certain unspelunked specificity: one’s identity finds no twin in cross-stitching, scarification, tattoo, or piercing in relief. Mapped, a dotter is all limitation and railing, as is the nature of maps. What you want to realize is that several colors busted as they brought her edge about. Starboard. She is a wax precipice—in that, drawn, the dimensions drop deeply away, unbuttressing her. Leaving her susceptible to light. Dotter is a cut-out, a flay. A pair of mimes out of papier-mâché, the last Matisse. She is de rigueur, but up in her crow—actual fathoms below actual cave floor—and not to sail. Moby this. Moby that.

Another thing about the dottery is: gangplanks. Fastened to struts, they jut out, splintering the central room. For one month each year, a dozen dotters stand against the walls on top of them. They remain against, at most tiny-stepping forward on what is corroded. They piss themselves there. Rarely, a dotter will bolt the length of hers and leap. She will cackle through the humid air, shrieking lightswitch, before landing a few feet beyond the gangplank, released from. Briefly, the whiff of urine and brimstone, rabbit nose, the weighty shifting of crinoline. For the rest of that day, that dotter will round the cell in stealthy promenade. She

will not blink, that night not sleep. The next day, you may yet find her circling, and so on through the second night, the following day, etc. Until another dotter is compelled to rend the middle air, this dotter is in pirate moon. And cannot, cannot cease to be the shark.

The daughter is expensive. To keep, yes. Also to rid oneself of. Like an injured Arabian, not wanting to put herself down, finding the sight damaging, she quelled for a few decades on the lea. Say three. Granted, it took her that long to develop a concept of hill, and it was dune. She realized: if the theater moves, then—caravan. The daughter traveled for a time under separate auspices. She came to. She paid her own ticket and refused sugar because of Candida—a country hated within all her ducts.

Dotter dreamt she was cratered in a vacuum. That she'd lived as a dip in the dust for aeons until erupting to adulation. The electorate doted, called her creole-god, the gold tone. Thought she spanned something. All this cinderelling because she was a narrativity: domestic turned at the ankle divine and smelling of hay. In actuality, she had not climbed chimney to glitter—had never had a mutter to be plundered by swan or bull-split—she had simply materialized. As bottlefly from meat. But this group, in their old age, had no word for nothing. It was a place to stay, then.

You think it is purely a matter of dipping into the coffers. It is not. What makes one a transparent is the process's instability, its teetering ink. Forms. Pages filled only to be blown across the curb into oncoming traffic like blind acrobats. Tossed jetsam. Whole salad-flocks of forms. Cry fowl. What you can't stop believing is that you were one. That you ached and spat the way a dotter was made to. Coldly nubile, a crease inside a fold, a morsel, dropped punctuation, drumbitten, a nipped-in-the-bud. And that you won't have. It's the refusal. The eternal matricycle not turning over. The snake disgorging its rattle. Skins will shed until no skins are left, and a dotter is all skin. The stuck will hop. Bier, bier.