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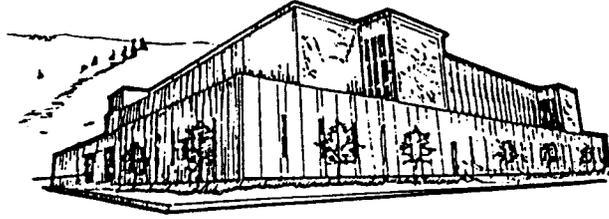
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Medium

by

Wendy L. Guild

BS, SUNY Brockport, 1990

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

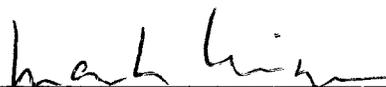
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University of Montana

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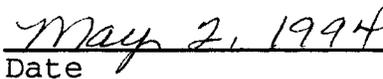
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Medium

He won't show me how the machine works.
He does know. Look how clean he is.
Haven't I swept the isinglass from his mattress?
Mica pricks my wrists then evaporates.
The proof remains hidden. I have watched him
through the blue shade, hold his hand like this,
play the correct music with women singing.
Nothing opens on the machine, no nozzles to direct
but still, here he is. One mark cleaner.

He insists it's a green box. I touch it.

I'm learning the triggers. If clouds scud, no.
If I eat grapes, yes. It can be day,
but not three o'clock. It's hard.

He can't be touched.
That's all I want to do now.
I'm afraid I'll love him until I'm dead.
His skin is so loose. It smells like nothing.

In August the machine was the size of a transistor.
It still is. The room is paler
but not so you can tell. He didn't care
when I brought it in. After years,
here it was. I told him my childhood medium
screed it in her marble set. I told him
children throw the I Ching with blocks
and logs. All children
know the date of their death.

Just under my skin is a net like pantyhose.
I feel dirt slick inside me like brains in a jar.
I dream sucking noises and sediment.

The machine can do this: Pull the net
through the top of my head. My feet
will be clean first, et cetera.

He never moves. I rinse his eyes
with lake water at dusk. They don't move
either. Is he showing me how?
His fingers curled to the wrist
when I wasn't looking. I try it. Something clicks.

The Feral Boy

Would you name him Sylvan,
the dark boy found in the woods?
His hair is spiraled with the slow growth of lichen.
A green smell seeps from furrows,
three creases of arms and legs.

Would you name him Theresa,
because gender makes no difference?
Ignore his penis curled like a small fist of fern.
A body seedless and perfect
survives just to its end.

Or would you name him No?
would you call him No and No again?
Replace his life viewed below trees
and the sky seen beneath the skin of a river.
He is correcting himself.

Blind

But how could I know?
The girl who kneels
to wipe lipstick from my instep,
does her untouched hair hang silver?
Perfumes rattle the windows or the wind
presses scent at the panes.
The light may be out.

He told me I would like it.
Emil was so clever, always talking, always
describing the aroma of the rooms, the plush
of velvet curtains or golden tassels grazing his lids
at, yes, that moment. I could taste the exact acid
of salt licked from a collarbone.
My ideas slicked from one cell to another
behind my eyes. I believed. But here

her hands are gerbils beneath my vest.
Tiny claws pinch. A sluggish mouth draws over mine,
a vague resuscitative kiss. The wine
she spooned me rises metallic in my throat.

Girls named Mary and Celia break pottery in the street.
Time has passed. Time is spent like coins
moist from palms and smelling of copper.
I assume wakefulness, which is to say,
my eyes open. The woman is gone
or is not touching me. I find my trousers folded,
crease out, on the bureau.

Emil is waiting by the cab. His face is cold with the breeze.
I feel his wink, a moth wing on my palm. "Step up,"
he says.

Containers

Deceitful as a melon or an auk,
you hide your seeds inside a chunky shell,
mime flightless birds and awkward flesh.

I want to flick the flower from its stalk.
Its vine will strangle me. Perhaps the smell
is not of frangipani but a mesh
of blood and beef, the tight skin of bloodrose.

Here, and here you grow, your foreplay luscious,
bright with technology, a click and hum of hunger
for fruit beneath ice, or a pink thing like a prawn
curled on beds of parsley. My rushes

come to pick my flesh. Sharp stabs. I like it.

My head's a concierge, now. My blue kit
hides silver tools to build a new windpipe
behind my mouth. Birds have made a home
inside my eyes. They gather shiny things;
cellophane, and keys for my collection.

Sugar

The pain of Eduard came to me this way:
I awoke from the dream of white otters
realizing he placed his left cheek
on the left arm of the couch.
The shape of his head remains, squarish.

He wore white
T-shirts and black socks.
And sometimes only that.
And sometimes less.

His mother's house creaks
with sightless animals.
They push their paws inside the walls,
scratch for weak spots in the plaster.
They want to come in or out.

*It is ten thirty.
There is no love for me.*

Eduard said, "platypus,"
when he meant, "sea turtle."
One lays eggs and gives milk and
does not leave her young.

*I came to memorize the waves as they leave.
The house, its walls, the couch inside tire me.*

He moved to Fructose Island
to live in this sand cube shelter.
Could I remember Eduard's revolution?
We laughed through the blood, through
torn throats and smarting lips.

*The wind is dead.
The island, the island is destroyed.*

Aura

Of course my name is Fernando LoCuesto, the Jew.
I am not a wooden man! Birdsong scrapes
the windows. Here is my heart, already.
I poke my latex corsage with bare hands.
My petals; carefully arranged fingers.

Storm windows are moved in all morning,
sprayed, and propped against the alley walls.
All work is done wearing red pajamas.
"Beat it," I say to my one bad ghost.
"I never touched no one."
The alley is barely lit. A sheen
like wet otter fur crackles over my body.

Windows sealed. The breeze scratched my skin.
"Some one is walking on my grave," I say.
All night in my rooms, I am not just still.
I glow and glow, reflected woodenly in the glass.

Saturday Night

You haven't seen daylight for years.
You surrender to an anonymous caress,
fooled by not nearly love. Look
for the way to run. You find
the blue stone where you should,
above the key on your old front stoop.
Put it in your trouser pocket.
Get lost. Get loaded down.
Drive out of luck.

The promise of the girl you loved
passed you on the right.
The nothing you feel
sinks heavy through your head.
Drop it. What remains raw is lost.
The things you believed about your life
lie in your papers. The town
will keep them for you.

This town startles you
in its similarity to the last.
The taverns dress for Saturday night.
A circle of tough men bracelet the door.
You stumble through, small now, and empty
except for that gone promise and the stone.

Present

No one says no to me.
I never ask.
Perhaps, if I could,
they would allow a small blue fame;
no glitter and nothing lurid

or morose. I would like to be alive.
I avoid discovering the absence of many fears.

Lilacs for one
or was it fishing?

No matter. I am very thin.

I am not invisible.
I buy wheat at the market.
They place the brown bag

in my hand, don't they?

I don't deny some contradictions.
Feel this/don't look at me, etc.
But still, they haven't said yes,
either. They must know I want it.
I tack pink bits of paper to their doors.
Their phones ring once and stop.
Who else would it be?

Some day I will assume we've never met.
Didn't I ask, just once, and wasn't I denied?

They gave me nothing, once. I believe
it was blue.
I believe

it must be returned.

San Felipo

Rain all morning.
Now the clouds subside and
puddles dot the dirt road.
Mud makes them copper mirrors
yet less golden.
You say you see your face
and what sinks below the surface
at once.

The mealy bugs have crawled
into the new sun.
They are dipping themselves
in and out of mud. Their tracks
are exclamation points, a drag and a step.

The jungle is wild with bird call.
Parakeets trill and squawk their green notes
above the dripping canopy. Below, a feast
of insects emerges. They mince among
puddles, sink and skim.
The water explodes into rainbows.

You hold your hand in a beetle's path.
It crawls over the first brown knuckle
and up your wrist.
With a twist and a flick
the beetle is sent flying.
In the silver air it remembers its wings,
seemingly, without trying.

Ghosts

All night the ghosts file in from the back yard,
trip the wires on my guitar. Hum; the guitar
in the corner.
The room is white with ghosts.

Apples spill from the cellar bin,
thud dully, upset.
The cellar maw gapes at me.
Gives me black looks.

Ghosts touch feathers to my skin.
I remember where they're dead;
black, except they are
seamless
and I suppose, various sizes,
died young, died old.

As always, the sounds come
late,
follow their percussion.
Still.
The time between sounds
full of breath!

Redington Shores

Houses land like pink blossoms along the shore.
Everywhere, green and yellow leap up
in golf course colors of old men.

The sun pricks my neck.
Even the lizards stop their pumping.
Tiny feet grip violet stucco.

Give me a forecast I can live with,
a wind I can see,
a bay stiff with whitecaps,
circles of egret feathers
held down with stone.

Tonight I will dream of Daphne
pursued by the merciless Sun,
as I am.
She rubs her laurel wrists for the perfume
I pick a futile crown.

Today I love the orange trees
with their acidic leaves,
with their small green birds,
fruit eaten cell by cell.

I walk to the pier and back
on a false blizzard of sand
with my shoes in one hand
and a cross of cypress in the other.
In the breezeway I stop
to pick sandspurs from my feet.

St. Christopher mopes on my door.
He is tired of protecting me,
sick of my travels to the ocean,
tarnished with stasis and the nail
poked into a hole above his head.

I think I will replace his totem
with cool pillars from Olympus,
barricade myself inside the sun's rouge
on sincere marble.

I will press my forehead to the footprints of gods,
the oil from their feet still glossy on the stair,
still smearing my face with oil.

Doll

I sew your skin together at night.
Imagine the time it takes to mend each rent,
see the pale and shiny X behind your knee?
See my fingers, raw with stabs?

It remains easy for you to leave,
you offer grief like a lure, suck
pity like bone marrow.
You grew too fat on mother-love, burst
all seven epiderms.
Departure makes you slim.

If I refuse your leavings, strange gifts
of colored glass and thread, it's not because
I loathe you, though I do,
only that I've made my house smaller
to release you.
Nothing of yours fits here anymore.

Career

You can try.
You can be my middle-aged man.
Wear father's blue robe -
why not? He doesn't need it.

In your genes or plasma a working program
insists you pinch my breasts from behind.
I could be washing dishes.
I could feel your knotted blood press me.

I hope you're satisfied.

I could do it more.

Houses on our street are green.
Awkward birds light on pitched roofs.
The stink of crushed leaves
settles into our patio furniture.
Is this Alabama?

Say you'll mend the screen door then don't.
Remember how you'll wear slip-on shoes and how
my breath smells of milk when I sleep.
Remember to leave.

Satin Mules

I have shaved my head.
Leaves and insects scurry
like dreams of opulence
over my eyes.

Life was rich.
I lay on a brocade chaise lounge.
Pink-mouthed, I sucked chocolates.
I watched soap operas all day and clopped
up marble stairs in satin mules
to my rooms at night. I recall
something about a tiara.

One morning I slipped from silken counterpanes
and grabbed a golden nut hammer.
I shattered crystal, tossed vases, burned art.
I threw my furs, all but one,
off the balcony and into the pool.
I`smashed all the mirrors.

I walked barefoot in that fur
to this far wood.
I roast tubers with wild thyme
outside my wattled hut.
I am never too hungry.

Vampire Butterflies

Father drove eight hundred miles in one day
to lay himself down in the sand below Hulalapai.
Perhaps a slight shift in synapse or chemical
startled his bloated brain to flight.

Father slept and through his dreams
he heard the tinkle of Las Vegas or maybe
a few thousand butterflies.

They covered him, crawled inside
his pantlegs, his shirt, searching
the soft beating heat.
Gaining the bridge of his nose,
one slipped a slim proboscis
beneath father's thin eyelid.

He dreamed mother's death that night,
his tears sharp and biting until
his eyes swelled shut.
He shifted on the desert floor,
brought his hands to his eyes, rubbing.
A thousand stings.
He dreamed his clothes caught fire.

Their neon-blue powder
sun baked to his body.
It took two years of sand
and heat to scrub the night from his skin.

Sickbed

I can do this:
float up through striated shades of gray,
grab for the talisman of red light
which means sun on my face.
I can watch blood through my eyelids.
I can will the absence of pain.

I hear a basketball game.
No. Nurses in thick-soled shoes
squeak off to Emergency.
One listens for my breath, checks my heat.
When I sleep, I almost see
her quick fingers describe strange shapes,
arrange them over my body and head.
I almost hear the conjuration,
words made spectral through repetition.

When I can walk among people
they will stare at me long.
Outside their visions
they will see whitish wisps of incantation
clinging to me like webs.

Everything

What was I looking for?

I believe I am not crazy. Everything
is wrong. The walls are very wrong.
Green? And no right angles. Tables
are jammed into non-corners. The floor
is too high. Well,
I'm no diva to say how everything should be.

Today I fell crossing the street to the beauty college.
I ripped a hole in my red tights and now
I have no passion. And now my hair is brown.
Must I wear earth shades when I am fond of primaries?

*Something is hidden in the back closet
under the mittens.*

Last night I dreamed that I lost everything.
Then I remembered where it was.
Everything was in New York. Then
I didn't want it anymore. Almost everything
was green.

Here is the post card from Ransomville.

John said his cat followed him from Boston
where he'd left it with his aunt. I said,
"John, your cat was gray." He said, "You take everything
so seriously."

I miss you as it turns out.

I know I lined the glass bottles
square against the stoop. This morning,
stars on the lawn.
Why do people
have to ruin everything?

It has just begun to snow.

Gathering

Pieces of me ride in pockets,
in the palms of people who touch me.
I drip into coffee cups, over
edges of kitchen tables.

My skin is everywhere;
under pillows
in ditches
on the mantelpiece
slipping away on the backs of cats
nuzzled into horses' mouths.

There are those who gather me up.
My mother mails back my hair
sisters form my hands
lovers leave their scrapings behind.
And in me always, the boy I swim to
in my dreams.

Chapel Street

It's the same heat in my stomach only in the dream his name is Lance. His left hand slipped with a chainsaw while trying to cut a perfect circle in his windshield.

I am with Erica at a bridal shower when he appears. I concentrate on not seeing him but my body ignores this and I shudder.

He takes my hand in his good one and we walk a night street. His friend runs through a stranger's yard to say, "You were always famous for exes." I am mysteriously pleased.

I kiss Lance on his mouth. It's dry. We stumble up the cemetery stairs where I continue to love him.

Tall Tale

Giant Frank scrapes at his teeth
with a fencepost to dislodge a bit of pumpkin.
He sets his gaze across the verdant prairie.
No. I mean green. Yes.
He sets his teeth against the gloss of girl-hair,
that switchback stink of peonies.
He considers sticking a flagpole
up a cow's ass.
He reconsiders, knowing what is vile.
He stands knee-deep in the Pacific,
massages a whale's sick heart.
His thumb in her blow hole,
she squeals her final suspirations.
I mean last breaths.
He leaps from one planet to another,
singes tresses and epiderms on flaming
celestial masses. I...
hair, skin, stars.

Cosmetology

I come to pretty them up.
Tubes of beige creams, vials of dense rose
oil, glittering shadows litter
the fields. The stink,

I wear a mask for that.
I pick bricks from a redhead's limbs.
Should I straighten her neck?
I can't work like this, though her nails
are lovely. I do what I can;
pink the lips, frost the lids, a rose

base for skin so blue.
The supervisor grinds by
in motorcycle fumes. A thin insect mustache
sticks in her gloss.
"More rouge!" she screams.

Were they as lovely in life?
Helicopters drop bubble-wrapped creams.
I see my roommate duck and cross the field.
On her third day she is beautiful,

efficient. I hear the P.A. crackle
through my mask. At four o'clock
instructions bellow, "Dine!" I fall
in line with my roommate. She feels
for my hand. Our gloves are slick with oils.

In Stockwether's

I want to be synthesized through the trees.
The weeds grown between cinder heaps
do not crush this seed of longing;
to be sung of in the crow's song
to wake with leaves in my hair,
my presence not strange in dark hollows.

My approach stills
ten feet around me.
I trail a silence closing itself
like the wake of waves.

I want to push my fingertips through the soil,
to shove my arms in up to the elbow,
to grow here, my pale misshapen limbs.

Family Drama

Couple married twenty-seven years. Tension. Barely controlled violence. Both smoke. Make gestures/mannerisms with cigarettes. Ten kids.

He breathes deeply, lying on the couch.
She holds herself and stares out the window.
The only lights, blue flicker of the television,
red end of a cigarette.

On her way upstairs she snaps off the TV
and doesn't wake him.
He rouses a little.

He: I was watching that.

She: You were sleeping.

She flicks the TV back on. She doesn't say, "come to bed dear."

Audience hears it from TV.

He sets the table that night for a big family breakfast.
Puts milk out in glass pitcher, etc. Middle daughter watches,
worried. Knowing looks between kids.

2 a.m. House silent. Can hear father trying to be quiet.
Gunshot. Screams. Kids run out to see father running down
hallway, head bleeding. Mother has broom, makes threatening
gestures.

He: You bitch! Look what you did. I'm bleeding.

He wipes blood in her hair. Kids move back. Father starts
shuddering, grabs the table for support, table topples,
breakfast dishes fall and break. Mother runs to him, slips in
milk.

She: Call an ambulance! Oh, Jesus. Ed, get up. Get up.
Kids, get out of here.

Middle girl tries kitchen phone. It's dead. Seen running to
basement. Back in kitchen.

Middle Girl: The phones don't work. (Starts to cry.)

She: You! You, honey, run to the neighbors and call the
police.

Fade.

Lights up.

Police, Mother, older children in kitchen.

Police 1: Ma'am, the phones appear to have been cut but there are no signs of breaking and entering.

She: No.

Police 2 runs in from children's bedroom.

Police 2: Oh, man! He fired a .20 through his closet into the kid's room. It went through their closet, through the outside wall. I bet we find the slug in that big tree out there. Jesus.

Kids run outside. She waves cigarette at Police 1, then at couple's bedroom. Puts left hand over eyes.

She: (starts to cry) He just harassed and harangued and harassed me. God damn him.

Lights down. End.

UFO Over Lewiston

Today I found sand burned to glass
in lots 72 and 3.
The sky bites off chunks of electricity.
Strange lights assume the shapes of water towers
on the horizon.

I'd go.
I'd let their electrodes probe my brain, maybe
flash my memories on a screen.

A first snap of synapse shows red walls,
antiseptic brightness. Next, Mrs. Brennan's
first grade class.
Blood in a toilet.
Pink carnations on a white strapless.
My mother, brown haired to gray,
holding me, me holding her. Coffins,
bridges, beds.

They tell me of their home
in a language I know.
A binary system, one sun, one pulsar.
Later, we drink something green from clear cups, maybe
by blue starlight.
I make tender or brutish love with tentacled beings.

The Bridge

A man sits on the bridge I cross.
He grabbed me once, said

I was pretty. He lifted his shirt
to show me a starry red bullet scar.

Stay in well-lit areas.
Practice screaming.

Those men smell fear like estrus.
My neck hair prickles each time

heavy footfalls sound behind me.
Safe men say, "I won't hurt you,"

walking purposefully.
Smiling like brothers.

My brand of mace is "Halt!"
I finger it with my right hand as I walk,

lace keys through my left fist.
Trees loom or men with knives.

I walk big muscled
like this next house is mine.

Uses of Food and Love

I. The Mad House-wife

At last the clouds achieve a pink of sodium arc
above the canopy of Starkwether's wood.
The city settles for water games beneath Niagara Falls.
The housewife scans a river that glints
with summer poisons. The Love Canal, now closed
has the look of dinner interrupted
by a phone call saying, "death."
EPA Reg. No. 77541

She glistens her skin with baby oil in the bath,
considers infants sacrificed for taut skin,
imagines her children recoil at the scent of baby musk,
an empathy born of Ovaltine mustaches and
Thanks Easter bunny bok bok
screeched over the din of dinner and TV.

She is sure that Daphne was a man
and spun to laurel, hiding his withered stump
from the Sun's feverish eye.

Finished calling down the moon, she sets a dish down
for the cat inside the kitchen door and clicks a path
in clogs in pill box hat to stand beside Niagara.
She seems a thing that could not feel
the touch of earthly years.

No.

II. A Game of Pool

I want to build the biggest zeppelin
the world has ever seen and thick
so thick you could not shoot it.
WILL YOU BE MY PARTNER
Last March at three o'clock I came
to call Eliot off the roof
and in the sky a black and changing shape hung
surrounded by eight ships glinting.
Four ships for dark.
Four for light.

(no stanza break)

Understand this fear of dark.
Solar systems we can't see
stay hidden by dark matter.

I saw the learned astronomer,
Carl Sagan, throwing dust in his bedroom.
The divan was occluded, the stars
that lined the walls occluded.
I could show you fear in a handful of dust.
WILL YOU BE MY PARTNER
One huge zeppelin, a floating ship
will shadow France entirely.
Let us find out if we must be restrained.
Passengers will receive helmets and rubber thongs.
"Welcome to the machine," I'll say.
"Find instantaneous velocity at $t = -32$."
WILL YOU BE MY PARTNER
WILL YOU BE MY PARTNER

III. Annals of Fruit and Love

You remind me

of a very hungry
scrawny boy I once
fucked eating olives.

I became a marinator of things, drizzling
oil on Baba Ganouj, piling
yams and apples in Tsimmes, feeding
him cloved and spicy meats, blooming
cherries on fire, gems women use
like Atlanta's balls. He was
too full to run.

Tony, finger the cello.
My spine breaks through
my back. Danielle Dechenne pouts.
His teeth fall out. Silence.

Slip my hands through the garlic sweat
beneath your breasts. Moist crescents
brush my knuckles.
I fist my hands in your hair to keep them
from tearing the robe from you.
But this isn't the way
Not here.

Not now.

IV. Affair Neo-feminina

The women in her group, smudged with sage,
prescribe empowerment instead of bourbon.
A thing of knots, her family, her pattern of memory.
"I am
half-way dead," she whispers. "To remember
my whole life chronologically
takes me to my death."

The women fleck their hair with gold, they rinse
their hair with lemon and they have hair
as the hair of women and their teeth
are as the teeth of lions.

"I am sorry
our relationship didn't work out, Jacqueline.
I hope we can remain lovers, anyway."

As on the nosegay in her breast reclined
he watched the ideas rising in her mind.

"I'm still
sorry. If you're ever in Sri Lanka
beat twice on the water drum for yes and once for no."

Manju, with his cumin taste and calloused hands
adored her in this country. Oft he bowed his turret head
and sleek enameled neck, fawning, and licked the ground
whereon she trod.

"I like you best in red."

"In bed?"

"Yes."

V. A Ride of Crazy Whore

With heigh! the doxy over the dale, he ran and tossed
his fedora on the sand and grabbed the housewife
by the hand. He sucked her fingers, the scent of lemon
thrilled his spine. Her hands so pale and blue with veins.

For Halloween, a trined fork.
For Mother's Day, a note;

What would the dower be
had I the art to stun myself?
I am depleted.
An all day date, I would have done
anything to see it never end.
*Jacqueline, avant l'usage, verifer le bouton pressoir
pour la presence de corps etrangers.*

I see her in the courtyard, evenings,
now a seer, now my wife,
hailing red crafts,
staring at the moon
through the circle of her hands.
She chants the Anglican pop,
And Deiscoides and eek Rufus.
And nothing rains down like silver glitter.
And nothing like light parts her gold-flecked hair.

Fingered

At Larson's Turkey Farm you can Eat All U Want. Connie plies you with thick breasts and gravy. Larson's is a temple of glut. Unlike beef, the thought of which makes my teeth ache, turkey slips supple and dark as concubine's lips over my tongue.

. Connie said that eating turkey makes you feel loved. I never loved Connie. I was there that June night, drinking at the patio bar. I stepped off the deck to pick my Tom. I heard the shot.

I saw a blond in a waitress uniform toss something in the pen. Connie has black hair.

I never should have touched it.

Past solitary, men hear their heels echo on the concrete walk, hear holy men say, "Save, save." Some men want to call their mothers. Some men want a whore. Me, I want to hold a flannel receiving blanket, to feel something soft when that missile of current blows my fillings. Or a lobster, so death breaks crackling and delicious.

Precognition

We don't need to meet,
touch fingers like old friends.
I see how it will be.
You have already said how well I look,
asked about my job, my house, my cat
whose name you remember.

I have already paid my fines and thankyou's.
I have waited for you to struggle
into confession. I fed you hooks
to haul up your desire fish.

You have said it was a mistake
to halve ourselves, to scurry away
and shell up in old and new warm faces.

I've felt the idea of you growing fat,
teething on my frontal lobes.
I've felt hectic red in my guts.
I'll have to starve you out of my life.

I never wanted this.
If you had come back one second sooner,
how good. How easy.
I want no ritual, no still-forming
links to you. We don't need to meet.
And you're no guarantee.
It's done.

My Own Show

1

I have apocalyptic dreams about Roseanne Barr's feet.
She makes me touch the puffy instep. In the underground
garage her husband yanks my hand as mushrooms explode
over Mount Olympia. I am dead. No.
A coma. I wake up in an Australian hotel.
I am driven to a perfume magnate's house
by my epileptic roommate, Adeline.
I am offered a large, square bottle of Opium,
which I decline.

2

The frogs have human faces, usually.
Sometimes the blue fish grows so large,
eating the others, he leaps out of the tank.
There are days when that damned Andy Griffith whistle
won't leave my head. Opie remains a central figure,
walking with his pole over one shoulder.
Strange fish flop against his thighs.

3

Here is the Intro:
Me, striding down Broadway
swinging sack-fulls of new clothes.
I stop to look at myself in a store window.
My name appears below my reflection.
Meanwhile, music plays.

I take the elevator up to 17.
When I step out, I bump into Murray,
my gay/jewish neighbor.
I tilt my head at him and smile.

Later, he comes down to borrow a cup of butter.
We kibitz about men. I am in love
with the man in the apartment across the alley.
I drink wine and peer out my curtains. I sigh.
Murray calls me a meschugena.

One day the dreamy guy asks me out to dinner.
I spend my electric bill money on a Channel suit.
When I cross the park coming home, Murray
is playing touch football with his lover.
"Hey!" he calls. "Think fast." The ball
hits me between the eyes. "Oh, my nose,
oh, my nose," I cry over and over.
I run home weeping. I open my apartment door.
I flick the light switch. Nothing happens.

Love Poem

Look what I've given up for you.
The red sphere is gone, part of
the inner ear,

something small like a smooth raisin.
The sore rim of your navel,
is that where you hide it?

I see by the coy flip of hair
you're not telling.

In September you dotted my body with blue lines.
"Here is the flank," you sighed.
"This coccyx is waste meat."
You pried at it too roughly.

At the diner I stared murderously
at the cigarettes poking
from your plate of yolks.

Behind the hangar you oiled alien bodies
the size of large puppies.
This air is solid to them.
They eat silver pieces, turn silver colored
without scales.
My lungs fill.

What is in your vest pocket?
It has to be the outline of a marble.

Loganville

I walked back to my youth town
a man in new shoes.
I've got less nap on my head
than when I was coming up
but he knew me.
Ho! That ammonia whiff singsong calling,

"Boy! You want our ladies?
Dream to put it to them good?
I remember your daddy touched that girl.
Left his black handprints over her skin.
She told us what he did."

Mama told me Daddy went up North for work
but the fires of that coonhunt still burn
the backs of my eyes.
I looked in on that fiery circle, saw the gentlemen's
hands collecting tinder.
Saw in the torch light the wild eyes

in those fine White faces.
The stink was like Mama singeing
pinfeathers off chickens.
I dropped my head and retched in the tall weeds.

I got a sweet heft of pearl handle.
I got a freedom of kin all dead.
I got a whipped boy grin
and eye-shine hating.

Leaving

"Take my daughter," she says, "when I'm gone."
Are you dying? Are you dying?
"She's a strong girl," she tells me.
"She walked six miles to her friend's house
by herself. She's good alone."

"Here are her boots and favorite hammer.
She needs some shots.
There's nothing else to know, really.
She likes blue."

Are you dying, I call after her.
The girl rubs the hammer stem
across her cheek. It's red.

She turns away from her mother's back.
You'll see her again, I tell her.
"Yes," she says.

Dirt

Spinning out in public continues;
talking, eating, bargaining, walking,
going home at night, the breath
of someone, breathing it in, holding on.
The dark behind his eyelids is the dark behind mine.
The night is smaller and we are in the middle.

God, the things I go through, skins and soil.
Let me lie down and pull the cool ground over me,
nothing of myself above the grass.
Not breathing, not at all.

I desire a wet stillness, earth smell
and grubs crawling over my face.
I want the quiet, quiet nothing
that is not the hot sun on my neck
or the red insistence of sex.

Or I'll desire nothing of worms or the sparrows
yanking them up above me.
I won't feel this stone pressing the small of my back.
I'll slip quietly, back and back again.

Aficionados

Stiff fingers of steam weave our heavy air.
Wood rot stink wafts through the stands.
Back in the quadrant, we speak of bulls
in hushed allusions of strength.

Imagine the woman, intense and flushed,
hoping to capture shed ears and roses
or a posie to keep omens distant.

We think they rise wet and demure,
slick velvet-red, sweet picadores,
from bays and rivers, fearless and dark.
Now, occult turns fur, turns
tooth and hoof, twisted horned gods.

Spectators linger, supposing the fear
will leave us more wild than beaten.
No comfort was allowed. Noon seats, night seats
the cold and warm throng down through streets,
floss taverns and temples full of wine,
blessing the animal we eat with desire.

Carnival

I will trade this Catherine wheel
for your small Czar.
He is coy in red velvet uniform.
Far calliope music maddens him.
His dance outraged, his feathers dip.
He screams, "Yes!"

Fine night for a carnival.
The colors fly.
The purple flag is missing
a gold tassel.
Behind the barn, the Czar smokes
his valium blue cigarettes, laced with strychnine.
I shout, "Pick nine!"

That is the game. Your number
comes up three times.
Please choose the stiffened Czar prize.
I like that shade of blue.
The dead Czar plays a sharp tattoo
strapped to Fortune's yellow wheel.

Napoleons

"I ripped this bone apart at nineteen," Mave says. "Are you talking about Napoleon?" Frank's voice wafts up from the cellar. "No. I'm telling these guys about that trip we took down to Cody. We had no money so Frank held up this Shop-n-Go wearing a bunny disguise."

Marty coughed in an effort to disguise his admiration. "Yeah, so we only got nineteen bucks, a case of Miller, and some pastries. The money didn't matter. Then Frank struts out like Napoleon, big grin on his face. I saw the teller reach to trip the alarm. I nearly ran over this beer seller

peeling out of there." Frank climbs up from the cellar, poking his head around the door wearing the bunny disguise. Marty screams with laughter. He is nineteen and easily impressed. Frank assumes a Napoleon stance and states, "It is the love of money

that is the root of all evil, not just money. That's a misquote. Hey, when I went to Cribby's to sell her a couple of boxes of Trojans, fit for Napoleon I saw the Reverend jump out the back door in disguise. He hasn't gotten any since he was nineteen, before he joined the cloth. He took the trip

to the seminary with his old ma. She was known to trip the light fantastic in her day, before her daddy's money ran out." "Shut up, Frank! I told you nineteen hundred times not to interrupt me. Get down cellar." Mave resumes his story. "So I grab this guys beer truck and Frank hops in and says, 'Napoleons!

my favorite,' like he's a pastry chef." "I love Napoleons!" Frank yells up from the basement. "Anyway, our trip got cut short because a camera got Frank's disguise on film and the cops caught us with the beer and money." Sounds of clanging drift up from the cellar. "Man, I'm glad I'm not nineteen.

"We were red-handed with the disguise and nineteen bucks, Napoleon crumbs all over the cab, the beer seller squawking. I broke my arm when my old man kicked me down the cellar stairs, we got so little money."