

RECREATION

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Recreation

--activity done for enjoyment when one is not working.

--late Middle English (also in the sense 'mental or spiritual consolation'): via Old French from Latin *recreatio*(n-)

, from *recreare* 'create again, renew.'

--"What do people plan?"-Daisy, *The Great Gatsby*

Abstract:

This collection was the result of a "happy accident" which occurred while watching late night tv and writing poetry. It felt odd at the time to be doing something so mundane and contemporary while also creating something as ancient and steeped in culture and tradition.

My life has always seemed varied, almost random, and that's the basic premise of this collection. From such randomness do these poems find purpose: from absurdity comes destiny, from insignificance comes enlightenment and everything in between is a just a privilege--but art, that's where this collection can live.

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00- Welcome

you may think the situation
is to find yourself green--wondering
furiously, how many hours
under the pleasure dome you've swam
 colorless, toward this--our light
 plasma burning white to awake,
 you may not believe
our collective views
show us the inside, that which
stems from the globe's crown--from
the portholes
of electric sleep

you will not
empty by the hour's end
you will not be left alone
tonight your skin is blue
and we will both dream
and it's to you I say,
 to stay
to keep
an honest mind pried,
because the things we do
on the altar or on the stage
in matters of loneliness and of pride--
may be upsetting to certain viewers,
maudlin infuriating or crass or slender, hot

there are those willing to dare and then
there are the kindest of creatures who stray,
who have greatness thrust upon them
again and again and again...
who stay up very, very, late
this is their transcendence—it's in their genes
tight and knit and denim and tender, hot
as long as it begs me for one hour more,
a distraction, a syllogism in utero
ouroboros on demand
a reason to stake at the midnight's snow
falling at our window—you are the kind of dazed

and the bleary eyes cling
to luminescing screens
pulling the contract into yourself as both
a communication—and a communion
to remember laughter,
to bear witness to these—our most precious words:

01- Sick Pony (clamp the muzzle)

HOST: so I heard that you have a sick pony?

LIZZY: —I do have a sick pony. It's true

HOST: so what's it like? A sick pony!

[Laughter]

LIZZY: It's like leading around a weeping skeleton that needs to be fed.

HOST: Wow...

[Laughter]

LIZZY: I know right?

HOST: Now I've heard of people who have sick,

relatives, dependents, kids

LIZZY: yeah, it's kinda like that.

HOST: tell me about that.

LIZZY: well—

HOST: I imagine you can't ride a sick pony.

[Laughter]

LIZZY: not with the spine misaligned and the hooves gone soft...

But yeah--Like feeding him

For instance, is a daily struggle.

HOST: really?

LIZZY: you have to force the tubes through the holes of the nose and clamp the muzzle just to feed him... and, it's just—

HOST: Right

LIZZY: just wrong,

HOST: but I thought you loved him?

Did you not once love this pony?

LIZZY: I did it's just—

HOST:--how can it be wrong?

When you love him?

LIZZY: it just is.

When you have to watch his hair

fall out in clumps

and the scabbed, rotting skin

beneath. And the smell,

HOST: the smell?

Of his decay, where
once was this bold
stallion, his hair gloss
and rushing and running

HOST: He could run back then?

LIZZY: he could run, his
ribs didn't protrude like
the splintered mast of a ship,
his back wasn't bent low to the ground

HOST: wow...

LIZZY: Last week I bought a rifle, I have bullets...

Yesterday I left a can of gas next to the stable...

HOST: Yet, he's still here?

LIZZY: yes, still here

I guess I'm not ready,
I want it to be special, you know what I mean?

HOST: I think I do.

LIZZY: I just don't want to find him

Folded and bloated one morning,
I want the blaze to reach the stars,
I want it all to just end,
but every time I head
to the stable,

I stop. I remember
the dishes, or the laundry
or I wash my hands for
a whole half hour, just letting
the water run,
letting the steam
cloud my reflection in the mirror.

Childhood I

/on carpet/ ants trace baroque/ shadows heavy blearing/ crumbs chase midday/ parched weeds swaying/
white chipped paint/ sour grapevine stains/ drooling black dog lipped froth/ body uncoils/ hallway is
leaning/ linoleum wet/ bleach acrid/ oil flooded fridge/father is drinking/ *I'm Billy the Kid*/empty brass
and spin the chamber/ steel and clicked/ *this is my six shooter!*

Outside the Layton Hills Mall

A soaked sock in the gutter red and blue striped along the whitewashed walls can't hide all the pipes smothering brick rusty smoker's outposts like incense burning carcinogens drift through the air and halt my breathe by the paint-chipped bench where a naked pine stands emaciated in the corner alley behind the food court cages and cardboard boxes huddled outside as rain and pinecones fall a heavy steel door with metal plates one tiny window with multiple gauges devices a camera watches diagonal from the corner a set of padlocked doors where black substance floods out to dry and solidify underfoot choking roots of trees in cracks of cement multicolored cigarettes scattered and wedge themselves along with bullet casings and bubblegum deadwood leaves a rumpled piece of paper wrapped round a dying cherry—a round thimbleful of red on the grease and the dirt. I touch its skin and find that it wrinkles and sags, I pick it up to find only a half, a bloody wound on its back with its bone-pit exposed. I place it in my mouth to find it is still wet and still sweet.

02- Dream (of toenails, clavicle, ears and arms)

HOST: Do you see him in the dream?

ZOOEY: Yeah. He'll show up all the time
all the random parts: toenails, clavicle, ears and arms
Like, the other night, I was shooting
videos of us in my room, the door closed
would come bounding out of nowhere
and start licking me and I hug him back—
just like before—like nothing
had changed, until his tongue would fall off
and I'd pick it up and try to put it back
into his mouth, but then he'd whimper
and whine and his jaw would fall
and shatter on the floor
and he'd just be staring into my eyes--
and I'm picking up teeth
and pieces of blood and fur
and toenails, clavicle, spine and drizzle

HOST: were you scared? how did you react?

ZOOEY: whenever I woke up,
in that gray it would become apparent,
on the inside it hurts, beneath the sternum,
between the vertebrae, under muscled fabric
--you'd still take it, still taste it
--looking at myself numb not yet awake
an empty mouth and an empty bed
a century of submerged slumber
and no rest—just the curled
tongue, dry and raw
—if a piece of shit could talk

HOST: but it is our own nature
for you, for us, where we put our head
down, we ourselves die on that soft
pillow and sort of fall, sort of solve
into the place—we descend to softest
playing past lust furrowed faults
and padded footsteps to the bath's
light and blue fluorescent
fizzled soft at midnight
and you were arrived at innocence

—to that safe place that is soft
like your mother, or a time
when waking was security and
slumber the music of daily dreaming
and like a dead dog it all comes to you
but frozen, tasteless, and with no meaning

Otherworld

Dying music forms the backdrop as we fall silken on our stage. We will tell the children this is the only known world, where sunshine is a lightning flicker across curtains, where echoes and murmurs make their homes, where all that could be named could also become departed and fall away skyward, its lakes and houses pulled upside down along their axis, the great poles inverted as if on a hinge, the oceans pooled out as white froth unfurls at our feet in whorls. Here a blue moth is suspended from a raindrop. Here a dove's breast collapses. Here the world is a grey eggshell and to the east has been pried apart, exposing a fraction of pale blue.

Coyolxauhqui

From night shapes I fall
every night, in love with a woman
and she becomes a white rabbit.

But soon, I find I cannot
feed her, or bring her water
when she needs it. Most nights

I am too far gone, searching
for paw prints in the snow
tread like the length of razor

-wire on the other side
of the road. I witness her
as the moon's reflection along

the rivers and glaciers from above
in deep midnight flight where
the river becomes alive

and glimmering its stygian
silver. Here the mountains' shapes
float out like phantoms impassioned

with winter, all lit and carved white.
Here crestfallen woods breathe
and crackle from the eaves. Here

every night is shaped
by the silence
of her absence.

Audible Breathing

Whenever
I sigh
I become a bluebird

I cannot fly
yet
wet with
rain
as I am.

I am
Burning
Whenever I think,
I am lotus on a black lake
smell of water & pine,

snowflake made of bone
I'm floating away
I'm incurable
I remember you as soft
flower petals, a curve

Whenever I think

of steel, of cold

It's inevitably

in my veins

You

& your curls

Grass & dandelions
sage, pine & samara seeds
twirling down
the breeze

will sigh
become bluebirds
teaching
to fly
By candlelight

There is no escape
from you
at this hour

when I sigh
beside the arcane light
under this blue parasol

Winds of summer

I remember you

will fall

as the sun

from oaken, gold

over the shoulder

Mountainsides
and not
find me
but look for someone
more deserving
to console

bright element
of a person
forgotten
until warmth
leaves you

Whenever I sigh

in a place almost familiar

It's because

you were never there

someone fell
from the sky
long ago

on the other side of the world
it looked green & full
in the blooms of youth

it swelled the river
& lulled the seasons
In a memory I wish I had
seen your relics

many summers into the past
I watched them
gone through windows
of your time here

Yet I know

I was there but on the other side

I was there too,
just not in the same room,
wanting to fly to you

in the blooms of youth,
I was there, in that same hour
but I was off by a mile or two.

03- Bird (in the heat was only longer)

HOST: Did you hear
That little Bird?

Did you covet that Sound?

LIZZY: when I first heard
the sparrows, the chirp
I was reminded
of my daughter's own voice,
something passed, from cobbler
to acrobat, from owl's lungs
through the oyster's gut
And back to her running
Through the sprinklers

In the hour before
the sun sets on
in the distance was summer
in the heat was only longer,
but the sound still carries
and the sun still copper

HOST: Did you ever stop her?

Did she ever come back?

LIZZY: I had to stop
But she never did
She kept going across the field
fading into the weeds and swaying
and falling off the horizon
a purple spot on the sun...

The world above her
And all the ground welling below her
Couldn't stop
but we had to go
Still to call and carry
on without her

Could not stop for one second more

HOST: Perhaps she's still here?

Perhaps you've felt it
In the cold house
upon waking, something pacing,
missing beneath the stairs?
Lizzy: I only know
there's a moment in the night
When I can't fall asleep
not when the chirping
will never cease
knowing that my daughter
is calling

Childhood II

/knucklebone shows/ice/ quiver/ brick/ huddled human-esque/ / 6:am blares black and deaf/stump of raw daylight/ printed charcoaled concrete/ mourning dove hails/ a question/ hunger is voluntary/ ink mingled sweat/drips/face / pins star amniotic/ diffuses noon/ angel lips part/ *and the breeze is come!!*

The Marriage Lane

Cut the house down the middle,
reciprocating saw buries jagged blade
through drywall, beneath the house in
the small gap between the two halves,
a narrow aisle, only enough to crawl
lined with steel black ribs of metal
rusted frame, kingdom of spider, dust
and black ticks, earwig and red centipede
me on my belly I inch forward, hearing
the grate of dirt on denim, brushing
silver cobwebs from my eye, I twist
on my back to loosen the thick
bolts and lags, rotating gun erupts
and roars as drill bit turns sparks
against rusted steel frame, wet
red spider bites my neck, crushed
against my glove, jacks in place, we
raise this half of the house, awful
creak above my head as frame rises
with slight bend, imagine the jack slipping
the house falling on unsheltered body, eight tons
of steel splitting skull and crushing through lungs and bone—

But it holds

Pulley's ratchet clicks and hooks free the monolith, soon
lane widens look up and see a tiny crack of day
thin blue line, as if the very sky
is opening up for the first time
wider and I see inside the house, strange
maze, with leaves of trees, outdoor and in
-door become one half surreal place
wedged between daylight and daydream
clouds drift from chalk-white walls
and the lane has dissolved
to dirt and leaves and sun
and no longer a subterranean cavity to crawl
ducking out I am blinded by the shiver of grass
by the column of breathable air,
I pull my body on bended knee and rise
the breeze comes, strong, clean.

Pall Malls

The first and only time I ever bought cigarettes was for someone else.

I asked for the Reds, but was surprised when the clerk asked me: Slims or regulars? Do you wanna be a cowboy or a movie star?

I could be both, a rugged loner, simple and tough as a boulder, crouched by a lonesome fire, swigging Jack with a gun in his holster.

Or a man of class and illusions—money's what loves me most, not-yet-dead in Hollywood, coked up and choked by a gold chain draining cocktails by the hour.

I went with the regulars.

Summer hit me outside with its dizzy, with its dazzle of dead heat. The pack burned in my hand with incendiary weight, my skin grimed mottled and unclean.

What does one do with one's body?

I'd like to think one could live in harmony with over 4,000 carcinogens in their possession, drink deep from its chemical drizzle—American-made, additive processed and breathing, could live the free and sleep and dream wherever this CO2 infused head could choose. But I remained unclean.

That night I chose not to smoke with her, it was enough to see the cold of dusk's coral glowing from the ember in her hand, to see the sparks flurry from the deft flick of her wrist, and fall and ebb till the end.

[Advertisement]

ION Stallion

“Two days ago, I saw a vehicle that would haul that tanker.”

EXT- DESERT- TWILIGHT

You walk to the north.

Fences betray you only to the wind.

You’ve learned to cut holes through the links and the barbs, how thin one should be to slip through.

You enter a metropolis cool and devoid of expression. Here in this desert where frost smears silver, lining the ash and dust and the ribbed fossil, the SYNTHESIZER builds toward its steady beat,

omniscience of unease. You walk faster, followed, stalked through the very place you once called home, quick to the byways, eye to the oncoming, back pressed to walls, cowering beneath the scarlet moon which mocks the doe: you cannot hide. We hear your footfalls along the shores of stone and brick.

To you the city’s eyes are closed with plywood, and a fractured jaw of pipe and shattered glass smothers the sound. It is faster now, panting and grunting behind you, its steel and rubber kick up the dust and tear through tumbleweed. You are our MESSIAH, wrapped in silk and leather, you have come to tame the beast. You travel quick to the eye, in a rapid-fire, CUTSCENE you enter the metal frame, hands on the wheel, petals pressed and knobs turned to chrome. The rabid skyline is yours. Somewhere a hand cradles a bloodied fist. Somewhere the crust bleeds black and chugging. You are the MESSIAH. This is your life now, this is you at the wheel, caress the chrome and taste the fumes.

This is you, blood-oiled freedom, over time and over distance.

This is you, taste the fumes.

04- Touch (Like an unseen and violent force)

HOST: So why did she stop touching you?

Me: I honestly don't know...

HOST: You really don't know?

Me: Touch is complicated, it's like static
holding two vessels in one hand
or holding two positive ends
of magnets and pushing
them 'til one slips

HOST: some say opposites attract

Me: but one always falls

Me: and when you force them, there is

like an unseen and violent force

kinesthetic and blue pulse

addled by an unintentional look

of course, it never ends, only

manifests itself again, in another person

HOST: ... and another

Me: it's like she had dyed

her hair, or sheared it off,

it follows you, no matter how far.

HOST: what does?

Me: not a shadow, but a unique part

of you which blocks out matter,

when lines cross like kites

doing battle through static-blue skies

Me: but I saw her outside

crying, burned those holes through her eyes,

and she saw me, and

I saw her, but I just kept walking

and walking, untangling the lines

pushing all static thoughts aside

until one slips, one falls...

The Donor

My favorite part was when they would touch me. I could feel their soft purple latex hands remove the needle from my arm and wrap the neon gauze firmly around my bleeding limb. The pain was just the ordinary kind, the clinic, an odd refuge from my life. Time would see me addicted to this process: scanning my finger and answering the questions: No, I have not had sex for money in the past week, No, I have not shot heroine or been to prison, nor have a similar, blood-related disease. No, I do not have a job, no, I do not have a vehicle, no, I have never held someone's hand and walked beside them in years.

All the pretty young men and women roamed white in their lab coats as they spread the glowing liquid across the little finger of my right hand beneath the glare of the UV lamps. All cuffs and needles, antiseptic and rubber—I try not to make eye contact as they rub orange gel for thirty long seconds at the point of insertion. I try not to move as the metal needle pierces the bulging vein. By now the pricks and the flow of blood feel good, familiar, warm.

The saline tastes cold in my mouth like sipping liquid metalloids through blue lips, I drift into hours lulled to the humming and whir of the Baxter—a future blood hungry machine, he takes the red flow from my veins and swirls it around to separate the plasma, returning my cells through a crazy straw of coiled line. All this occurs while I'm in a deep reverie, reading a novel, or book of poetry.

A simple hour is the purest respite from the day, and stepping incandescent, a figure born from the blur, approaches her voice first, a brushing of blonde second, always smiling—my favorite phlebotomist would touch me, business, gentle. Pouring me from the dream, she staunches the drip and repairs the puncture, tells me to gently apply pressure, tells me to have a nice day, tells me I am free to go and her nametag tells me her name is L'Rae.

While I'm faint and paid and riding home—I wonder to myself, how she got that cute scar above the lip, or green eyes that seem to wander some distant forest, I question why she should be stuck in such a human form. I wonder why she draws my fluid and holds it in her hands each week, how could this be the closest I will ever be to her, I wonder why this touch is the closest she will ever be to me.

These Leeches

For the remainder of his days,
spent as a leech,
coddled alone in his mud-
filled cave, blood—blood searched forth blind in the wet and cold,
a retreat from the daylight, from the city and from the green hills of home.
A flat, cold-bellied leech starving downstream, at night this worm rises
to escape—blood flows from the larynx, tongue and mouth exposed.
Now returns a larvae, in its second stage of life,
now squirms the maggot, pale and wet and blind—
and now leeches, the trachea fills again with blood
and leeches endure.

The rain sluiced down the sides, falling for days and weeks,
the rivers were made of your houses and a deluge filled the streets,
and those leeches—these leeches.

These leeches spared no fat and no hogs, these leeches ate and ate,
these leeches dressed themselves for dinner, these leeches gorged and mawed
blood followed jowls like rubies lodged in the bowels.

These leeches fell from the sky, laced the grey bulkheaded nimbus with black
worms and wet black blood. Our city became a swamp, a canopy
of moss and rust filtered out the lukewarmed sun.

They wet the sand with its stick and its pulse.
They swam past your neighbors' upended, floating cadavers, they swept
the streets and the rivers blossomed before them.

They spread no words, only hunger and mire—multiplied
now a cave, and a mouth, shelter untainted blood
gorged themselves fat, grew the hog, grew the lard
dressed themselves for dinner,
blood followed blood
like rubies in the mouth
These leeches swam downstream.

05-Window Shopping with Satan (once bitten and juiced)

TOM: I love windows.

I am always compelled to look out
to seek them in their highest form
their highest tower—numerous times

I have broken

and entered and picked the lock,
penetrated her apartment to look out from on high.

HOST: What did you find there?

TOM: something small, but refined, it held the color
codes of her very existence, hereditary
marks wrapped helix along her sink drain:
a single hair, immaculately curled.

HOST: Is this when you started to stalk her?
Would you consider yourself a stalker?

TOM: I am merely a detective, detective of love.

HOST: Of love?

TOM: since the physical isn't there, I cannot ask her
but I will find out
by what she leaves behind,
abandons, discards,
clues and ruses I take and I keep and I build!
I build perfection in her image,
perusing the family photos on her wall,
fingering the newsprint and lip balm,
sniffing the books on the shelf, licking
the empty diet coke cans and potato chip bags...

HOST: Everything but her,
And do you feel that it's invasive?

TOM: Anyone could do it if they really wanted it
as bad as I do. Why
would she leave
these things if she didn't want them

to be seen, to be touched, breathed.

HOST: And you are the detective who makes
the unattainable whole?

TOM: My only wish is to know how the apple sounds
once bitten and juiced, once frozen
or boiled, peeled from the skin,
guttled and found full of seed.

HOST: But you could easily ask and know.

TOM: It's mystery that attracts me,
she is the last one to grace our earth,
the last thing that made me feel
small, innocent—scared and alive

HOST: But you're only attracted to beauty, to shape,
an infatuation of the physical, the sight,
the touch, the smell and the taste.

TOM: I've found so much about her, found
what she eats, what shows she watches
waist size and fingernail shape
license plate and facebook page
how she knits the stitches
where she hides the scars

HOST: Yet those are still physical?

TOM: for this knowledge I adore her the more
it goes beyond any earthen build,
to the unattainable which has always fed our dream
like some slow burning signal out her window
pulsar waved to the pitch and roar of something outside
an observer, miles out, naked
in a place where she could think of anything but me.

[Advertisement]

The Chrome. The Dirt. The Fathoms.

You'd built this body for pleasure. You'd built this body for another.

If you needed it, to be there.

If you need a friend,

Make one,

What could I give you that I couldn't build myself?

What can we create that isn't flesh alone?

and even then, how inescapable

could it all be, but beautiful?

Beautiful body parts.

The deceased.

Lockers full. The Chrome.

Graveyards full. The Dirt.

Oceans full. The Fathoms.

I could make you how I please,

In its own image, huddled beneath its wings.

The body we call friend, the body we call self,

In great need it comes to

Look to the dead, look to the strangers

Choose your friend's gender,

Identify a race, ethnicity, a culture, set of virtues and religious beliefs

Our steps toward the fathoms,

We inspect the chrome cubicles of the morgue,

Identify an age, a color, a creed,

Be the one to tell me, this is the only kind

And comb the mossy dirt of the graveyard,

All would bring the last of them homeward,

All would bring their mother's ash and father's corpse, heavy

With morning's dew

All to bring you the most

Beautiful body parts

With which to build!

If you needed it, to be, there.

Absolute Zero

She is knitting with silver hands by the fire. A scarf takes shape, sifting the cables of red/thick/bright, a tethered lumen emerges from the coil. She thinks the scarf is too thin, she says that it wouldn't keep anyone warm—not forever, not when the negative occurs, falling deeper into a soundless winter. At -459.67° Celsius all things will unravel.

She knows the bear in his matted cloak cannot hide, his adipose tissue separates and dissolves into the frosts, where the heart behaves irrational. The body shivers as the chambers no longer steady to a rhythm, but falter erratic and quiver.

She has seen the moose, russet and tall, sink to its knees and undress beneath the snow, the fibrocytes giving way and the skeleton folded inward. She tells me to imagine confusion and hunger, utter abandon and give all to her. Lie down, let the white sleep take me beyond the snowflake and the star, hardening our bloodless bodies by the hour.

I wanted to tell her that to give the world to apathy is to give more than a bitten appendage, more than the core of bodies' threads, more than flesh seared and blistered by cold, more than frozen ligaments and bone. Our inherent sacrifice is our chance to rekindle any kind of self, sheltering us in the solitude as moon lights pools of broken Celestine.

But she was older and wiser than me. She tells me that she was once mortal, was once beside me—knitting. The hours roaming through blonde fields, plumes wide and unfurling softness around a breeze. She has walked to this outer plane where our heart's ill recedes and to only fill with something that is always unfinished, where our words and our work will spill and our frozen body uncoils and our thick, bright heart will unravel.

Childhood III

/spaghetti /milk stagnates/ car keys and a plastic yellow table/smoke of a dawn left idle/a spoonful/clatters
against teeth/blind babies drained of chroma/breathe pneumoniatic gases/ morning/frost /*car seat is
freezing*/ push wooden truck till the wheels/burn to touch/hands buried/closest to earth/exhuming the
maggot/millipede coils/smell of fungus/blue-shelled pillbugs, box/-elder firebugs/swarming the
leaves/rot/heavy with life/

Dead Residence

The father knew it as empty shelter
and the mother was fragile and depressed before
the death of her only given daughter.
A pentacle of branches nailed to the fore
it was our job to move the house of the dead witch.
the parents managed the park and gave life unto her,
And she preferred Wiccan,
would break to tears to say the name under
her breathe. All items left in the house were relics,
a memorial, a temple exalted.
And our blasphemy, our job, was to saw, and rip,
Deface, desecrate the dearly departed.
Of all the things, we took a box of wine
and it was hard to believe in ghosts in summertime.

It's hard to believe in ghosts in sunshine
This house fell toward empty, white and stark.
It was two halves; it was cut down the line,
Blue and white trim, moved to a different park,
Teen magazines, signed photos from glory
days of rock n roll and Elvis, the Orioles, the Dells.
The pills, weight loss, happiness beyond forty,
And steel, shingles, axles, panels and wheels.
Furnished with things that make a brief portrait
Vacuum, décor, kitchen, booze under sink,
Those things, they say "get slim, get fit" portion
Plastic wrapped up in black, too much, I think
To live, one day always recalls her name.
We do respect the dead, not less, the same.

We do respect the dead, not less, the same.
A house we lived, vacant except the sundry
Which were left by him when he died, but what stayed?
A man? a photographer, a darkroom, empty
Basement, cold and concrete, tripods, red lights
Storefront windows looked out central Ogden streets
like a soft box, barn doors open an old film with gunshots in the night,
Above on the top floor was the apartment we lived in.
liquid chemicals sat in the rust sink,
Iron horseshoe nailed above the door, rusted

Steel and well-worn, well-used, wizened antique.
All of this was what my father trusted,
Haunted, our life, our home came from the dead,
Our livelihood was all things inherited

Our livelihood all things inherited,
the tar and its black heat. We spilt into broiling
yellow, a quaint, small house of brick and red,
an apricot filled tree, reaching, eating.
TV static ran daily, Simpsons, Seinfeld,
and M.A.S.H., lingered for hours beyond the dark
We burst forth from afar, along a field,
Toward noon we fed horses across the park
We heeled sidewalks across the street, climbed up
The sunlit branch, felt most summer or spring
Green Day and Bare Naked Ladies, sounds of
ice cream trucks we chased into twilight's sting
Photos show her smiling, holding us as children
We would lose her so fast, taken from us.

Empfindsamkeit

I

*Existence is a virtue almost foul,
A seedling cracked and buried in the soil.*

Nothing happened. Everything just did as was just to do and moved. The earth's core shifted, molten orange with its heat. The air stirred one particle at a time, ruffled in a wake of feathers or the dust breathed in sudden from someone driving down the roadway and passing along at the sunset of my old home. Perhaps all our thoughts did the same, our minds holding an array of individualized universes, trillions of old homes... But that's too much. Today I prefer to think about now. Yet why, whenever it comes to you I am still back there? It is only that small slice of my being, like an appendage left there. I would say 'ghost' but that's not right. I'd think of it as a retrospective twin who lives in the past as both place and emotional womb. A phantom limb.

II

Our Creator would never have made such lovely days, and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal. –Nathaniel Hawthorne

A child was missing, my round-head fair child with the blue eyes, my new pink nephew, was gone. Taken from his mother's house while she was away. His father said it was okay. I was playing with the child now, noticing which parts of the face belonged to his mother, to the father, the grandfather. It was wrong, I shouldn't have been there but was glad that I was, so long as this man trusted me, I still had a chance to return him to the womb. My long-dead dog was there, but she was changed, she had a sunburnt forehead, pink flesh blackened and crisp, as if she had been lying with her head exposed to the sun for too long, hours, days, years even. Who left you here? She seemed of a fragile nature, likely to obey me as kill me and I deserved it. But of all these morally precarious situations, one loomed the greater, a dark god watched over me, my life and my decisions I made on that day, whether it was with the stolen child or outside meeting the tail-wagging corpse of my dog, something else was dictating the actions, watched the seconds with the minutes.

III

*Perhaps the human soul was meant to be scattered in pieces,
like leaves in autumn
or the taste of snow on teeth.*

In the daydream I was decapitated. My head in my hands, then, my head on the floor. Soft carpet caught it all. Hair hitting floor, a crumpled sound like tinfoil collapsing. I wrote a grocery list, but it was in a stranger's hand, asking for items too foreign to find. So I went online: looking for a virtual fortune-teller, an oracle at my fingertips. I found that there were many. I would ask all of them, and if the answer was consistent, then it must be true. I wanted more than self-affirmation. I was always asking the same question... I'd known I'd left a ghost somewhere, wandering alone these halls, the sound of knife on key. The art of the backpedal ...the question: should I go home? The feeling: does anyone want me?

IV

It was here that I realized that not belonging was in a way its own power. The observer stands alone on his rock and surveys the rest of the world.

Everybody forgets about Tuesday, not me. Tuesday is when the world is in full flux, the blue is vibrant and the people most present, Tuesday is when our hero returns to the green world, faith in and faith out, there's always Tuesday. I would later realize that I am like a coin, pressed tight to the earth on one side while the other becomes battered of sun and rain; oxidized to the multitude of happenings, exposed to effacement, it becomes calloused, yet on the other side, the sound of a flowing underworld, of chthonic madness, the miracles hum of the absence of light. If I were to spread half my life asleep and half my life awake, having to choose sides, I invariably fall towards the question: who needs me more?

V

I am lashed to the back of an enormous black cricket, whose jaws creak and clamp at the gears of the world, slowly the steel erodes. How many lives have been gambled away by one man? How many times and how many nights did the people seek him out to throw stones? And did the black smoke of the jungle's fires curl into spindled horns? Sleep too long, and the clouds will overtake the sky. I dreaded returning to loneliness, to the old cabin, where, a stream of flies come pouring through a crack beneath the door. Relentless, the flood buzzing like a motorcade, I couldn't swat them away before they flew into my mouth, their soft hairy bodies squirming beneath my tongue, tiny pawing at my windpipe. I opened the door to search for the lost dog. In the graveyard it began to rain. I can see the yellow fields, a man like a match-stick parched by the sun. My shadow was on the rocks when I heard them say your name. As a child of god, I had never felt so alone.

VII

I am what you would call a serpent, said Love, something latent in my nature will always find you, hidden in the grasses, undulating downstream, wrapped tight about an ankle, deep, into your veins, mine is a poison which lives to find you. I was supposed to die last summer. A DVD told me so. I answered a short survey, and the spooky programmed generator inside predicted when I should die. And summer always comes with its chances. I've grown fond of the expression "Because of you" at once it is accusatory and appreciative. It's not your fault though. I'm the one who keeps thinking of you, this kind of sunlight could split the world in half. I have known not to name the days as "good" or "bad" but only the actions that

occur within them. I have to pretend I live in this city, pretend like it's all I've known, or will come to know. Learn to trust the spirit-body, whose limbs have been sheared.

Twelve Minutes

Yesterday I was hanged,
In the morning I walked from my bed,
with a sack over my head.
I felt the madness of the world
writhe beneath my shackled heels,
and the clink of heavy chains
was so distant and clear
that I relented.
I climbed the tower of God,
Blind, I took the vertical plunge
from a crane of a thousand feet.
the black rush breaks hollow lungs,
and I felt wings brush my cheeks.
My neck should've snapped,
but I dangled there for 12 minutes,
Waiting to ride the midnight river downstream.

For twelve minutes I thought, and thought,
I smelled the aroma of dead roses,
I heard an old gramophone
scratching an underwater waltz,
Its waves blurring through the sunlight
on the mossy stone,
I thought of my daughter,
clapping with two hands,
with two perfect hands, she reached,
two palms unblemished, and unscarred,
free from all dirt and as soft and pink
as a child from the womb, cleaned.

I thought of Black.
That the day and the sun were black.
something about the shadows
lead the sun's rays away from the earth,
coming at me slant and leaving
the color muted and the shadows black.

I thought of White.
This white fever

of the dying sunflower
who rises before the sun,
whose light is left on
in the late hours of the night,
who sleeps curled in the corner,
And asks if God can see in the dark
And asks if God can see in the light

I thought of Gypsies
who carried those spices
in their pockets
across the deserts
into the metropolis under the sun
where Moorish scents reigned
with Jasmine and alcohol,
with undulating midriffs
under the purple stars
like the sand beneath a stream.

And I thought that
I would meet you in the sky house,
and you would reign there forever,
waiting to guide me downstream,
waiting to rise from that final dream.

God Meat

then you find that her armor is feathers
arrayed in silk and bright colors
as delicate and airless as a soul

a blind mystagogue
to kill a god, and eat god meat
to eat the guide of Souls

when you find the most solace
in the darkness of your hands
palms shield eyes in bleak prayer

you could see the serpentine
eyes wide and jaw extended
but still moving

not fast or feral enough
flayed out god meat
white fat marbled the divine slab

tryptophan from the tender suet
flesh fallen off the dead corpuscles
then you find that her armor is feathers

hewn through cartilage, with grace
cascade of adipose, bubbling
hisses the poultice through

scar tissue soul beneath the gauze
she was so blue and alive
that you had to stare

to eat the guide of souls
to flay it out, pure vessels
flowing out, cleaned.

07-Food (and essence are what make them...)

HOST: So there was—

Sapientia: Don't you know it's a sin to start a sentence with 'there was'?

HOST: What?

Sapientia: Yeah there was, there is, there's no action, people want action, they want things to do things, they want everything to have its purpose, to shout, to crawl, to laugh, to sing...

HOST: Yeah, but some things just 'are', there's no way to explain them with an active verb.

Sapientia: but that would be absurd, people want verbs and people want meaning, they want justice, they want answers.

HOST: but some answers you can't give, some things just are. Their very act and essence are what make them.

Sapientia: But it doesn't answer anything, what's the point?

HOST: There is no point, at least not one I can put into words.

Sapientia: But, I do remember when we ate him.

We made him sign a consent form—on this day,
in the year of—whatever can't remember— we bear witness
to the death and prompt preparation and consumption
of one Mr. Jim Reed Oppenhour—and those overalls!
and he had feathers coming out of his neck,
bright blue-green, beautiful feathers!

HOST: So he agreed to be eaten?

Sapientia: Yes. He did.

Well, he was sentenced to death anyway,
the most bizarre death row inmate, Oppenhour.
He murdered his wife.

They proved it in court.

HOST: it just seems odd that he would
elect to be eaten as well.

Sapientia: That's just how it was in those days.

Plus, I don't really have a preference.

HOST: with what you eat?

Sapientia: With what I say and eat and breathe I have
no preference as long as I'm the verb and you the thing.

Blue Boxes

A black field of bubbles blooms
one-thousand eyes
air vessels clustered
in the field, a shiver,
a glistening ascension
to the surface of water
steam rises, sifting from
the bottom of a boiling pot.

As I cut the cardboard blue
box, I wonder who lives
in between the City in the Clouds?
are they a humble, rock-worn
species, with dirt on their heads?
Or are they in Elysium?
and they're already dead!

As I lift the cardboard blue
box and let the noodles cascade
down, I realize that happiness is hard
work or the smell of laundry wafting
from the homes and laundromats

of a city in-between Autumn, between wind
-gusts, heartbeats, oil stains and crinkled bits
of orange flame swept across the gravel toward me.

Area 51

A waiting room lies beyond with a water-cooler bubbling clear and gastric beside the mellowed paintings— of faraway lands of ice blue-skies and terraformed taupe—which line the clean angles of the space. It could be a dentist's office, with the plastic fern and the gleam of floor. But no music & no humans, no faces grace the hour. No receptionist looks up from the desk and no doctor greets me. There waits no armed guard beside the door, shifting weight from foot-to-foot. The architects of Dreamland never sought to stay forever—subject to mind-wipes and carpet bombs, cost-effective to abandon, pristine windows left clean and unused, unaccustomed to the loudness.

The times when I feel too ordinarily spiritual, I come here to imagine how to rebuild the world as it is, how to find what's already waiting in a desert honeyed & fine-limbed, I hover for days until landing in a blur—in a feather's arc & fallen path—upon the gravelly sand—bending toward my chosen home, it radiates & this frequency carries the dawn—never burns without me, touching all the sedimentary granules and living tissues. Groom Lake opens unto salt & subsumes me in her shaded maw. The cooler ripples another internal bubble shivering up the blue cylinder. If I could be painted, I would be the sun fallen along linoleum, I would be the desert waiting.

Gigantopithecus

I was walking through the woods when I first saw you.
I'll admit it was love.
You did not think so.

You slipped silent to the safety of the trees.
But I pursued.
You have such big feet, I said.
But you said nothing back, retreating further to the mists.

I walked the rest of the way alone.

You should know I devoted my life to finding you.
I studied. I inquired.
I documented each sighting, each whisper.
I measured the indents and snapped
photos from different angles, cutting
myself on the brambles, stumbling across the wilds.

At the University they call me "The Lover of Bigfoot."

And on soundless nights I run my fingers along each plaster cast.
I stare at your picture with the hours on my lap.
Flickering the reels frame-by-frame, scouring the negatives,
waiting for the moment when your silhouette will finally speak,
and say the things I need you to say,
when your blurred and hunched figure will gesture and motion to
come closer, extending your hand through the shade of the forest.

I walk those woods by day and sleep in them by night.

I keep this journal of my time in the field.
I want you to know how much I want you to come back.
You could come with me to the city, where everything is taken care of.
Though I know I'll never hear a reply from you.

I've given you songs & poems, sketches & paintings,
extolled you as the dream you've become.

I will climb higher into the mountains, sinking to the mud and clinging
to the colder.

I will sleep on rock and earth, on matted hair and grass
scraping skin to granite's rough.

I will learn to fish, learn to trap and to hunt.

I will walk barefoot through the woods
and alone the rest of the way.

Childhood IV

/urine soaked mold/corrodes the ammoniac/sponge bark tree/ blind/ toothless scream/veins pulled to red/claws pulling air /legs kick and the child bites/with one good tooth/drawing blood/wait/ shade signals hour/ pebble/lodged in ear/ heads of apples/ empty house/ portrait of Jesus/ doll-dragged hair/ *To weep in dreams betokens bliss/*

08-Hospital (imminent thoracotomy)

HOST: --viewers are just joining us now,
So what were we talking about?

what were we talking about?

what were we talking about?

Toad: about the afterlife

a bout of coma, a taste of cancer,
lymphoma, leukemia steady and ceaseless
as the room you're lying in, white, gleaming
hairless, breathing, barely

HOST: oh yes, you know, you hear
the stories—their stories

as you're lying there, in their
blaring, in their blindness, in
their blinking, blank and blood

Toad: like when I woke up
for the first time, in a last time,
in a hospital and I came upon Midnight
And into the machine—beeping, beeping
All of my brightly packaged dreams
All wrapped up in the light of day, sleeping

HOST: what happened to you?

And I dropped them all down
into wheels which turn, beeping

machine wheels that pump
your lungs breathing, wire
plastic tube coil spinning blood
seeping, mind plugged white
sleeping, such sun, plastic sleeping

HOST: What was happening to you?

Could you still feel the world?

Toad: I'm not proud of it, but
failure of the body precedes failure
of the soul, same such shame
to become dis-made, undone,
The un-creation of the mind which makes
sunlight cowards such sleeping sounds
the holes in your arm, the adhesive patch
the wires, the blue bracelet, the stains,

the reminders of all things done while you were away
hands held you while your eyes close
and you surrender when needles bite
the vein and feed you, only voices
blurred over fingers feel the throat sliding
pressure on the wrist rapping
metal over the chest near
the heart, a throne of spasms
HOST: ... a shocking list of events...
Toad: but from the poisoned orgy
of the machines I could still hear this one voice
someone else lying clean and white in the bed
a neighbor to me. I felt guilty at just being,
I tumbled sour, I sent the corpses home.
Host: but they spared your life
and there is no binary there,
Toad: I am a middling flower.
florescent lights the clinic
and I am their skeleton,
An imminent thoracotomy,
To plunge hands into this thoral cavity,
and bring something forth from the black
blood slick, digs deep, pulls something
new, like a child of fresh salt from the womb
and screaming, furious for life, only wanting
to speak, but only able to shout, a child
who has no one to talk to, when all it needs
is tell someone,
in person, that it loves them.

[Advertisement]

Elysian Fields

As I walked past the cemetery towards my home,
I saw the black silhouettes of the trees set ablaze
by the rippling pink clouds and the soft blue
West, wandering vexed by the headstones and empty
benches beside the bubbling fount and the roll of tires
against the reddening dusk and upon the mausoleum stood
The golden angel above its roof seemed to move, and then seemed to sleep...

It was here that I wanted to rest,
It was here I wish I was buried, had my family known then,
that Elysian Fields was so affordable and easy,
I would no longer be a restless spirit soul-severed
with the burning ash, shade-blistered and never leaving,
Starving infinitum in the bowels of this barbed-wire pit.

And if I could hold myself in pieces
Cradling my limbs in a heap like dead firewood.
My skull tipping a stone's weight down. So that one day
I might crawl upon a bed of boughs and rest my broken
and fold myself a fetal coil, holding these limbs forever,
My body a cradle called home.

Let not my tale move you toward discord
for there is always a rectified price—throw in
your coin over the eyes. One does not get to choose
where they rest, as one does not choose where they wake.

Translucent

how the blind worm achieves flight
—the form
 is not unique, I've seen them
upside-down, balancing a life on the curve of their back,
 scaled belly to the air, clawing a mechanical
sheave of instinctual buzz, stiffened
and writhing
their last.

I knew then that even given wings,
 I'd still choose to crawl. Who, if given the choice
 wouldn't be greedy for another furious day?

One more go on the sugar-cycle—but this time,
with wings—wings which are by virtue delicate, the most fragile pair in the kingdom,
 thin, translucent armor: these oily membranes
 will only carry you to your death.

And so you too, die silly, displayed in the windowpane,
 stuck in the sugar, pawing skyward, eating
the dust as it spirals down
 filtered by rays of the reddening dusk.
You open your mouth
 one last time, tasting the gilded flakes,
 devouring something close, enough,
 to the sun.

09-Dead Sister

HOST:

I know that you have, I've had to do it too.
Have you ever held your breath so closely?
Have you ever been unable to breathe?
Have you ever taken a breath and held it so tightly
people would call out and flail, people would scream?
You must know how
people go through this panic because
they are denied one thing.
You must know how, I've had to do it too.

Ophelia: that's how I decided to love it
my breathing alone brought the sun
to my window that morning, my inhalation fell to water
ran that steady fissure through my sleep, and held
the day to the deep gulping of it all.

HOST:

I know you have
I can see you saying
that to your mirror,
You must know how
practicing such a speech
upon waking— hypoxic
I know that you have, I've had to do it too
sweating, ice cream-fed
at the shore and the rippling--
but why would you love it?
Why would you?

Ophelia: My mouth and its contents are not kept for you,
my lungs and my windpipe are sealed at my choosing
to stem the flowing abundance by the choice of one
being confined to the geographic
being the one whose breathing will lose it
-too close, even intimate, inward and diving
almost like being alone, almost—

HOST: -but, how do you breathe?

How did you choose it?

You must know how
such environments
pull each particle forward into lungs which only ever swallow?
I know that you have, I've had to do it too.

I try to find a way to die –
I choose implosion. I turn inward,
my synapses sail to oblivion's
last parade, and in there, I will drown,
I will see the stellar blood burst
from the nebula of my eyes
hallowed black and all of me descending
--I will cease willingly—
knowing that I can't breathe.

Host:
But how did you choose it?
You must know how
when people play that game would you
want to be drowned?
I know you have, I've had to do it too

I usually say that I would be suffocated
because I, like you, aspire beyond sleep
I asphyxiate and pull away peaceful
head slumped under a pillow
fetal hugs and a mortal squeeze
like some toddler padding down the hall
at midnight and the fish
need to be fed, the glass orb
needs to be poured
But—I don't know,

I don't know

I still see you drowning
I still see you fallen from the dock,
alone, asleep with no rope
submerged
I know you know how, I've had to do it too

Sometimes it's important

that people know or they don't
that you can say I don't
know, Some people don't know how
to embrace other people
--don't know how to ask
for that.
Some don't know

I know you know how, I've had to do it too

that they don't-- if you asked
people about those things
about love and suffocation,
about pillows, pills and drugs,
they would be wise to say
that they don't know

Zen

My bones feel
the warmth
of the water.

My yellow gloved hand
scrubs suds against the fine bone china,
clinking. I hear the tiny chimes
as the wind picks up,
cooling my sweat-dampened neck.
It slowly lifts the curtains, clacking
them against the window-sill.

I hear a helicopter slicking clouds in the distance
and motors veering off the highway.
Then the splash and scrape of my brush
against the stainless steel pot.
I pour sweet-green soap
into the rushing water, growing foamy
bubbles toward the surface.
There are all kinds of love in this world:
The rare kind.
The strong kind.
The fragile kind.

I remove my glove with a rubber squelch and slap.
The faucet ringed with hard water
stains and speckled grout ceases to spurt.
Somewhere above me a cloud shifts,
releasing clementine light
of a borrowed sunset
and happiness
in this hour
is my role,
to be here,
washing these dishes,
watching these orange rays disappear.

10-Reliquiae (decay which somehow spawns life)

HOST: What happened when they left you?

: My only instruction was to waste time, to idle as a car, preparing for the call, to meander the now-vacant halls.

HOST: And did they leave you anything?

: They left me the TV, a microwave, I had to wait inside and stay.

HOST: But would the world sans-self change?

Would they change? what would they change?

: At night the train bellows deep, where crickets become frogs become snakes become swamps. It was meant to be a refuge for the birds, a marshland.

HOST: --but you mentioned a train?

: It was all sprawled out along the tracks.

HOST: but no one goes out beyond the tracks?

: I was there, waiting.

HOST: and there was no one?

: no one but me—but it was only so many years.

HOST: How did you hold out?

: after the tenth the water dried up and calcified, after the twentieth nothing but static, and the wash of buzzing absence became a hollow sound.

On the thirtieth the birds left me.

HOST: but they could have taken you. They could have saved you.

: Who are they, who are we to say who should live or die, or dictate another's life? We are all infinitely different but ultimately the same.

HOST: They still should have been there.

: We still have this. Maybe one day I could show it to you.

I'm on the floor, curled into myself, the ceiling or the window tells me things, about light, about fading. "The world is still outside" they say.

Cattails, rush and reeds, water glissando beneath my feet.

Thorn and weed, everything sticks, claws at me, contaminants freed of the blessings of water also, cling tight to me, salt-scented of brine and a pungent decay which somehow spawns life.

I am walking the track's wilted horizon, the bone tree clacks dry against wind.

Give them the world, give my years.

I see its silhouette turn westward, lank thin—but still proud, taller than the others, she wades deeper to the water.

Parasail of feather, leather foot and knife-bill, a slow dive.

I want to come and search for you.

Will the water tell you where I have been? will the reeds tell the gulls where I will have gone? Can the chattering cricket play just one more for me?