

no weeping
in the
outhouse

—

Love is long overdue
If you count the time it took to know her, too.
Held too close, an angel will let tumble
Its ersatz jewels held under a smock spun from
wool.

To unknot himself was to appear bandy-legged
Wrapped around the waist of a man he pegged
As a bodhisattva; but more likely a straw-bale.
Pain dovetails a broad veil

Upon his face. In wedding, tamped; wet
Shoe hugged by a gutter eddy pamphlet
Printed on it, outstretched: a veiled Jesus
“*Suffering will end*”. Well, as he pleases.

—

Here we are on the cusp:

She's been more than
happy as of late
to introduce me to her
fraternity of butchers

Each palms a steel hook
in one hand and a raw
haunch in the other

We walk ankles crossed
in a pack
Trailed by singsong
blowflies

She and I:

We are now stretched over
a newborn scaffold erected from
shy touches and moments of
peakness
Cross bars bear hex bolts
of balled up cobwebs
Critical joints are welded together

with wet baby powder kneaded
into lactate clunch

Enclaved, I mouth the words:

I -

you -

we -

Thus, the masseter is
stricken with fantasy
Our eyes wet with emeralds
I must be a lapidary
in her world

In recollection: Why,
Were they clerks,
 not butchers,
after all?

FULL FRONTAL JACKRABBIT

A yucky garden of half burst seed
pods and nibbled lace leaves
Quaking, quivering under the thorny
brush like a spiny wild animal in the
throes of sunbaked acorn nectar withdrawal
Splayed toes coated in the yolk of little gray
smashed bird eggs and sprayed
evenly with ants
So long! There was nothing natural about this

In lieu of weeping a crow has laid
claim to half the flesh on its head

Haunted Autumn

I thought I fell in love with a magician
But they turned out to be a big, fat boiling frog
How salacious! I thought,
Wandering through the hall of scaly oats
That had sprung up overnight, stitching
The creaking patchwork floorboards
Bloated with mildew brush strokes

Children run through the corridor, a fireplace
Roars at secretarial logs burning with shame
But then a turnkey rasps and an ember spit
 from a gasp
Swallows a panel dripping with wood gore

How bare! they chimed,
Rattling a baby on their knee
The haunted musk of a ripe pumpkin husk
Zips around the courtyard with manic savagery
The baby suckles a torn lace sleeve
A beetle, upturned, lies dying in the carpet weave
And at the magic hour, a rabbit returns to its
 sheath

Bottled Rocket Erotica

Instead of taking care of his fantasy, he decided to swallow it whole and meter it along his intestines for safekeeping. There's a red-hot centipede climbing down his throat now, and at the last minute he panics and grabs at its butt but a few legs peel off and it slips down, gone.

There's no France for me, *baby*, there's no *Italy*. The wooden casks of European romance are bound in oiled leather bladders and little droplets are eked out, but no more, never more than a trickle.

A dove-gray dove toy-step walks along, blindly with filmy little ringed fish eyes. Romance, fantasy, exhaustion; they find him no longer than the little green fingers on trumpet honeysuckle vines that curl and beckon for a taste of chain-linked wire.

Fortunately, the end is in sight: fifty oil drums of pesticide are parachuted out all over the nation. He chases his glass down with a little bit of vinegar and there it is again: a bit of heartburn, the soft, trailing beginnings of what we call: some type of love.

Two poems

Jonathan tried bath salts and then
couldn't hold a pencil anymore. You
gripped one between your forefinger
and thumb near the lead and had
him grab on the eraser end like a motor-
bike handle. Together, you wrote:

fly
wheel
bark

You were going to help him do his
taxes this same way, but then he stopped
returning your calls. Fortunately, he
lived right down the hall from you.
For months, every time you passed by,
you'd knock on his door. Finally, you
wrote him a note and slipped it under
the door:

why
feel
balk

Well, only then did you find out that he
had moved out, weeks and weeks and weeks ago.

—

I'm bathed in June

Whose fire do you press against to feel warmth
Whose fire did you neglect to tend, or tamp

June leaves ringing in my ear
I hear it ring in the neighbor's kettle

We are looking for the fragrant droppings of
cashmere soldiers that may have been gently looting
our stocks of fruit, potatoes; grains in tarpaulin bags
with the corner clipped into pour spouts.
Nose to the ground, we are joined by rockstar
cupboard daemons that on first glance are
cockroaches but with intense contemplation become
crickets and on a final negligent glance are
cockroaches again, a conjuring perfected.

*YESTERDAY, THERE WAS A HOUSE BUT NOW THERE IS
NONE. WHERE ONCE WAS A HOUSE IS NOW A FENCE,
AND WHERE ONCE WAS A FENCE IS NOW AN UPROOTED
AND TORN LANDSCAPE.*

A lemon tree knocks on the kitchen window and—
ignored—bursts into trepidatious arousal, unloading
baubles like the clutched and wrung neck of an
heiress at the mercy of a wacko.

The night is constantly interrupted by the domestic
sounds of glass paperweights dashed to the carpet in
outrage—“YOU MET UP WITH WHO IN CABO?”;
plastic palm trees withstanding a paper-flake snow
flurry—which—now exiting REM—are recognized

as the convulsive rejection of sultry lemons dipped
in pompom mold up to the waist.

*BY SHEER WILL ALONE DID THE STREAM FINALLY
EXHAUST THE CRACK IN THE ROCK AND BEGAN TO
FLOW THROUGH FREELY. BUT AS THE SKY SIMMERED
THE STREAM DRIED AND CREPT LOWER, AND THE TOP
OF THE ROCK NO LONGER KNEW WETNESS.*

Sometime while we were saddle stitching together
slices of white bread and jelly with the deep
imprints of four index fingers and thumb tips, a
gassed up stranger had wobbled a slashed and
bashed polyurethane office chair under one
objectively broken window.

A fervent defense in favor of louder gravel trails
off; whodunnit becomes whydidit becomes a
wizened hunt for second hand ADT signs.

*YOU THINK YOU ARE ALONE, BUT ALL AROUND YOU
ARE THE SOUNDS OF A VIOLENT UPENDING. IN THE
MOMENT OF GREATEST SOLITUDE, A FRESH GOD WITH
RED-RAW SKIN EMERGES NOT FROM THE SOUL BUT
FROM THE RHYTHMIC CLANGING GONG OF THE MAIL
SLOT DOOR.*

No longer genial to the pranks, faces gaunt and
hands palsied from the silent, woolen war waging

on with the pantry fiends, we turn to desperate
measures. A pickup truck bed cargos newly drafted
rose bushes; planted, trenches glower underfoot.
Brushed metal traps set next to every hole;
ominous, bulky and magnificent as waxed
Humvees.

Lying in wait, weighing lye. Meanwhile, singeing
our noses with uncapped Franzia passed around like
smelling salts.

*ACROSS THE STREET, A HERD OF PEOPLE ARE
SCREAMING. THEY BREAK INTO RIOT AND PULSE AWAY,
LEAVING BEHIND THE TRAMPLED REMAINS OF TWO OF
THEM. ONE REACHES OUT TO YOU AND ASKS FOR A
LIGHTER, "I'M NOT A LIAR," YOU MISHEAR, AND
MIGHT REPLY.*

Borrowed Tongue Scraper

My fire is wetted by stone
Hedged between a parapet
Quite soothed crescent star
Cut smooth on fresh tchotchke
Stoned, furious rabbit
Under a heel—hurrah!—
Lets out a turbulent squeal
The crescent moon wheels and
The night steals the
Heat from the hood

—

Those moments lie
In first-drenched lives
And in dismay

Clear as god
We complain
Complete and blessed

A Death on the PCH

A rock fell on my head and killed me. When I woke up I was lying on my back in a field of warm, soft grass. I sat up, palming and fondling the grass besides me, behind me, all around. Satisfied, I lay back down and rolled onto my stomach. I flicked and twirled blades of grass with my tongue, sawed grass between my teeth down into a lime green pulp. Then I lay absolutely still. I stayed like that for five years before getting back up, brushing off the loose, damp grass that stuck to my moist skin. While brushing myself off I noticed that I was naked.

My head began to swim, and I felt peculiarly alive. I'm not supposed to feel dizzy in the afterlife, I said. I realized I only said that inside my head, so I cleared my throat and said out loud: "I'm not supposed to feel dizzy in the afterlife." My voice was immediately swallowed up by the deafening expanse of grass all around me—there was nothing else around me, "there's nothing else around me," except grass, not even a bug, not even a cloud, not even a breeze. I began to wonder what killed me.

It was a falling rock, but where did it fall from? It was from high, high up (or was it?); I squeezed my eyes like a trigger, to trigger some memory of a scent, a splash of color, something to help recollect a rolling lushness, or a concrete humming, a tower, or bark, an antennae, a lark—was I hiking? Was I a pedestrian? Well, did it even fall, or did I fall on it? While musing I had sat back down and tucked my hands beneath my thighs, wriggling my fingers between the grass and my thighs, making my seat writhe, as if I was sitting on a toilet seat lid woven out of snakes.

A car, cool to the touch where there was a dent. The dent was the size of my hand, and I knew it was cool to the touch because I placed my hand in it, and I knew it was the size of my hand because I placed my hand in it, where it was cool to the touch.

This memory; ah, I was a pedestrian, after all.

Rebar welded into a makeshift ladder; it was leaning against the dented car; no, it was propped against a tower of sawdust shelves in the bed of a pickup truck; no, it was propped against a chainlink fence, the fence was so tall the ladder only went up halfway up the fence, and at the top of the fence

clung a rotting dish rag, and the grip of rebar left flakes of rust in your palm like smears of pollen.

I was standing again; now, I was walking. I walked straight ahead, but who knows if I was walking in a straight line. All my shoes had been worn down beneath my left heel only, so I must have favored one direction, if only slightly, over the other.

Plastic scones of flowers wilted in orange carpenter buckets. A flash of teeth, brilliantly white. How beautiful the person whose teeth these were must be. Oh, wait, the teeth belonged to a billboard, the teeth flashed brilliantly bright on a sun faded billboard, the edges of the smile diffused and softly glowing like wet toilet paper.

There was someone in the car; my whole body rocked and then abruptly exploded from the memory. It took quite a while to recollect myself. The real MVP was my right thumb and forefinger, which had stayed together like tongs in the blast. Like a shapely pair of legs in a grotesque burlesque act, they leapt around the grassy field kicking bits of gristle around until they found an eyeball, then pinched the stalk of the eyeball and began dragging it around in an army crawl, systematically looking for more parts, until finally I was more or less

reassembled, though this took a long time, quite long, decades even, and by the end of it I was still missing quite a few organs, but honestly, you don't need all of your organs in the afterlife.

The person in the car had thrown a rock at my head. No, it wasn't a rock. It was rectangular, a metal box, some sort of heavy electrical appliance. Lying back down on the grass, trying to regain my composure, I licked my lips, and realized I had forgotten to fully attach my tongue. It flopped out from my lips and rolled like a teardrop down over my ear.

I always enjoyed the sensation of tears entering my ear canal when I cried while laying on my back. It's like a tiny gecko lover's tongue. As in, your lover is a tiny gecko, not the lover of tiny geckos. I lay on my back on the ground with blood streaming from out my ears. Like a lover's tongue the blood rushed out my head and I had the craziest feeling that my head was being eaten out.

I became aware of a presence next to me and very slowly, painfully, I craned my neck towards it. How disturbing: it was god. It had crawled up next to my body, throwing its shadow against the horizon, and was staring at my dying face with a perturbed expression on its face. If you've never seen it

before, I've got to tell you, god is not a particularly welcoming sight. It looks like a large, hairless, legless, earless dog. On the end of its snout, where a dog's nose might be, is a little sleigh bell. I guess I was too busy dying to hear it jingle when it crawled up to me.

"Listen," god said, wincing, "I didn't really intend for this," gesturing with its snout, "to play out how it did." I waited. The bleeding stopped. I made my look favor a bit more expectant. Catching my drift, god added: "Sorry."

"Why am I dead?" I demanded. "Who killed me? What killed me? If I was killed by a toaster, god, I'll never forgive you."

God pouted. "That's a bit harsh."

"Okay, no; I'm overreacting. It doesn't matter what it was, it's no reflection on you. I just need to know. For my own sake. Something to come to terms with in my afterlife. Tell me, please?"

"Well..."

"Please."

“I heard Glasbury is nice this time of year.”

“Please tell me.”

“Sugar isn’t worth its weight in salt.”

“Tell me.”

“It was a tape deck.”

“Are you serious? Who drives around with a tape deck in their car?”

“Someone who wants to get rid of a tape deck.”

“Why weren’t they looking when they threw it?”

“I don’t know. Why were you standing so close to the curb?”

“I—“ I couldn’t remember. Then I did. The ladder —“was watching someone climb a ladder. Someone was climbing a ladder leaning against a fence.”

“Why did you care about this person climbing the ladder?”

“I think we’d had sex before.”

At that god started laughing, a genuine, peeling, gargantuan arpeggio laughter. The sleigh bell jingled gorgeously. God had no teeth; instead of teeth it had a bunch of green tubular spirit levels, the kind embedded in carpenter tools. In each bubble was a different universe; I think we come from the one inside one of the left molars.

“Where are they now?”

“Who?”

“The idiot you has sex with.”

I felt an incredible wave of irritation rise inside of me. I imagined the last trickles of blood were bubbling and boiling out my ears. “I don’t know—“ I meant to put some edge in my reply, but it came out a shy whisper—“calling an ambulance?”

“I can’t believe you let yourself be killed watching someone you had sex with doing something stupid, and you don’t even know where they are now. You’re so stupid. What was so important beyond that fence?”

The blood had completely crusted around my wound. Actually, there was no longer any wound. I was back on the green grass, good as pre-owned, lying on my back. I pulled myself up warily, rubbing my neck. I gave god a sour look. “I don’t know. Why are you even asking me questions? You’re god, shouldn’t I be asking you the questions?”

At that, god shrank itself to the side of a pinhead, farted, and disappeared.

The sea; I remember, the color of the sea! We were by the ocean. There was a fence, and beyond that a cliff, and then the ocean beyond the cliff. Oh my god, the sea; I couldn’t smell it, but to my chagrin I could feel one granule of sand stuck in between my teeth and gums.

There was a boulder on the shore, and on the boulder someone had spray painted a snail, and under the slug it said “Sluts 4 slugs”. Stupid, god, the stupidity of humanity, that couldn’t tell the difference between a snail and a slug.

We were rocking our bodies against each other, and an orgasm came like a tide, only the tide was made of cotton batting, soured with twenty years of sweat.

Our bodies clapped together like heavy, sticky blocks of yellowing upholstery foam.

Yes, we were living on a house boat. Or, we were a house boat. Thick blocks of crusty upholstery foam had been stapled on top of built-in wood benches to cushion our musings, our foreplay, our meals. The benches were hinged and opened like a treasure chest to reveal paper bags of swollen magazines and books in elephantiasis, wool blankets stained with rust, a cracked glass orb lantern tattooed with dust, a significant number of dead snails. When snails die they leave just the shell behind, so it looks like their soul left the body. From this we can infer that snails are souls. My snailish soul. There had been bright plasticky life jackets in there once, stiff and proud as sadomasochist collars, but one day the house boat, one day—

One day the house boat capsized. Metaphorically speaking. And very slowly. In the beginning the water seeped in timidly behind the textured wallpaper, leaving wet scratches, as if a prisoner lived in the walls and was marking the days passing with scratches of their fingernail dipped in urine, and before we knew it a water spot suddenly bloomed, to much awe, like the shadow of an angel unfurling its wings. The floorboards swelled up

with mildew and began to split, and we could no longer walk barefoot. We danced around in three-inch heels before a four-inch rusty nail pierced our sole, and upon recovery we installed monkey bars on the ceiling so that we could swing across and never touch to the floor.

We kissed like bandits in those last days. Love is no match for knickknacks. Under a final tsunami of painted ceramic squirrels, we held tight to each other, stealing the other's breath, putting our mouths together and gulping the air from the other's lungs back and forth to buy time. We paddled restlessly, kicking aside amber bakelite napkin rings and clingy wet satin girdles. A toothpick holder shaped like a woodpecker got in between us and with the next breath, I swallowed it whole; choking on its wooden beak, I flailed, breaking the grip between us, and we began to drown, separately, apart, alone, our lungs filling with oily screws, coconut shell beads and dirty balls of aluminum foil.

I kicked my legs and screamed underwater, my vision overtaken by bubbles, giant bubbles, bubbles that whole universes lived and died in. The back of my throat burned with salt, my lungs burned, my eyes burned, water filled my ears until I was completely deaf. I cried, out of frustration, and the

sea snatched up my tears, to be strewn and swallowed by some ugly little fish, which would later be swallowed up by an ugly big fish, which would be speared by someone hungry, who will burn its flesh and pick the white meat from its bones, and exclaim, how salty, how tasty the meat of this stupid ugly big fish is.

Then, the strangest thing: instead of losing strength, my kicking legs began to propel my body forward, faster and faster. And once I realized I could control my speed and general direction, I kicked to aim the top of my head towards what I felt was the surface, and I kicked harder, now crossing my ankles to kick both legs as one, feeling the power of the undulation pass through my entire body, until I felt like one long, sleek ribbon of flesh flying through the water. I could see the water ahead of me begin to lighten, from black to deep jade, as the sun began to pierce through the filter of krill, bubbles, rotting flecks of kelp, fish scales, and plastic refuse. Faster, and faster; I felt so powerful, and I realized I was still holding my breath, my lungs were that powerful, I could hold my breath forever, that's how it felt; and suddenly, I saw the white hole of the sun undulating just beyond the last few feet of water, the white hole burning brighter, steadying itself, like a dancer correcting a rickety pirouette, when,

When I burst through the water, leaping through the
sky, a human no longer but now a dolphin!

by sua yoo

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