

FIGURE – M A K E R

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### I. DIS-ARMED

<i>Glorious Outfit</i> .....	5
<i>Birthday Orchid</i> .....	6
<i>Slipped Ellipsis</i> .....	7
<i>The Canning Jewel</i> .....	8
<i>After Spleen</i> .....	10
<i>Aphasic</i> .....	11
<i>Cultured</i> .....	12
<i>Crawdad Movement</i> .....	13
<i>Holy Day</i> .....	14
<i>Ballroom</i> .....	15
<i>Spell</i> .....	16

### II. ONE-ARMED

<i>The One-Armed Poem</i> .....	18
<i>Filigree</i> .....	19
<i>An Oracle by Any Other Name, Etc</i> .....	20
<i>Wool/Water</i> .....	21
<i>Faun</i> .....	22
<i>Creature Study</i> .....	23
<i>The Baby Contest</i> .....	24
<i>Lenscrafter</i> .....	25
<i>Timestep</i> .....	26
<i>Luckless</i> .....	27
<i>Tenebrism</i> .....	28
<i>Impose Upon</i> .....	29
<i>Flectional</i> .....	30

I.

DIS-ARMED



*Birthday Orchid*

Hates a gaze, gives nothing  
til sufficiently ignored, but still  
it can breathe as my loveless puff does  
& does, throats the curtain  
of leftover bath-steam.

To talk with you is to live an outbrained love  
& become non-permanently non-bodied;  
is to do my head in, into the clockwork.  
To tend to the flower is to enact a funny  
sympathetic magic.

I knew the gift was last-minute  
but decided to be wild for it anyway,  
& could not know it would last  
so long so loved—gnarled, thin-  
potted, nonsensed into spa-thirst.

Last we walked  
in a garden together,  
scruffs of catmint  
dazzled, halo-haired,  
& labrador violets broadcast  
tigery mouthwalls.  
Sharp-armed Indian Physic shot out  
fastened spangles.

The holy buds of my own  
get see-through,  
-scopic. As if to say:  
there is effectively nothing wrong here.

Through spring-yellowing, memory-  
leafing, we swim  
up.

*Slipped Ellipsis*

Those who prefer to wear  
an eyelet in lace may,  
but only at the collar—closest to the words.

I was middle-named for a gap-toothed supermodel and she  
her grandmother. The rest there represents  
a redundancy.

A hole in the intarsia sweater  
falls right in the animal's mouth, making  
the decorative rabbit diastematic.

Each metallic tumbler has an opening,  
a gem-colored cave for catching  
what's unsaid in.

As the plane takes off  
the little girl says, pretty soon  
we will just be a speck.

Its face lifts, my ear rings,  
the lover who makes wishes will—  
on a number of dots on white.

*The Canning Jewel*

—for the baroque pearl housed in the Victoria Albert Museum’s Jewelry Gallery

Your odd peeled body    caught by a pearl diver  
—to him you were a bead, his beard and yours  
slaked,  
          salted, gemmed  
          from the sea.

A nacre-layer torso is nice; is nicer, gives way  
to a scaled tail    you use to catch diamond  
prawns, to swat  
at hot, watery men    who grasp for your scaled tail.  
In a sinister way, rippled  
          —a serpentine lisp flitting across the surface  
          of diamond water.

As prune as a J—as violet-prune  
          as a lower-case j: That’s the way your tail hangs.  
*A nice tail you have, or, an ice  
tail you have.*

Not a anemone,  
you are a    eponymous gem.

You have this growling mythic liquid,  
I have    this lowly language.  
But language should be low,  
          should creep up    like fingers  
of the tide—not languid,  
          but slow.

A ruby floret clings to you—  
Well, I tacked it there. I’m water sign, waterier. Whatever  
—    ever water.  
Do you like    the bulbs?  
          If they drop from your body  
          we will see them in a hundred years.

I’ve been clawing at them under water  
          for a hundred years.  
Pawing them, petting them. Ever wetter.

You grip a saber, splintery  
and male. You have used it in weirder,  
wetter weather. Does this seem odd,  
to one?

Is the knife wet? *You could shuck an oyster with it*  
Do you get it wet.

The saber which mirrors your scaled tail  
hisses and glints like an S—green  
as an S. Or greener,  
ever greener, gone glass  
at the hem of the sea.

*After Spleen*

I'm the young but,  
with him, the pet

a night; his bed; beautiful scholar

his gold baths  
whose ooze  
I'm like

young but with  
nothing,  
the pet becomes beautiful;  
washes;  
even in baths of senility,  
whose itch gets  
through a night

his dogs dying by the balcony;  
the night becomes a tomb  
for all who cleanse  
in solace

I'm like the day  
whose rain-rich boredom  
washes to cleanse  
the warm shot of night.

*Aphasic*

The words did faint    dead away,  
or else pickmouthed—decay

of humming glottis.

My tip-of-tongue,    or body's

project—to birth a word,

hot    on the spoon, lustered

up & lozenged a jewel. A round

ruby    of cough syrup, a sound—

*ahem*—expelled for you, my alexic. If I forget,

say, *piano*,    that tricky vowelette,

let me go one at a time—    there,

that doughy blow of the *oh*,    into the air.

*Cultured*

There is a Japanese woman  
in a puffed sweatshirt with clean  
nailbeds, tiny bowls & a careful spring-  
loaded scissors.

It was the silverest & so least disguised  
month, burnish at its height.  
An affectionate device was wedged  
into your black lips,  
just as you had relaxed.

Well, that you are somewhat  
overgroomed means  
that you are very dear to.

A stirring warms inside until  
interrupted by a number of beads  
placed there—a fondness of.

Dark-hued, sun-marbled, & spread  
on beached rugs, bleaching.  
As in Dalmatians, all spots  
as equal as.

Oh, you are just a purse is what you are,  
& you clam up with a bright  
click,

what is most loved  
held back.

*Crawdad Movement*

To have caught and held a moving crawdad, what  
hold to have had on it.  
To take what advantage. How much.

*What fishing? No fishing. I just plucked the periwinkle from a rock, I just  
asked you things.*

The naming of something for someone;  
to temporarily name a particular man: Crawdad.

*My limbs were fronds: flailing, fit for a terrarium, too fern-like  
to hold anything in place.*

The ability to hold a moving thing still. The effectiveness of  
holding. The still of memory. The advantage to be had  
of having more time.

*I flung things into the river. Your name is clear, kind of like the river, in that  
you can see me through it. If I could just hold this in place.*

To have had more time with a thing, for a time to be  
had. For the moving creature to have been had.  
The memory of muscle; muscle-memory.

*At dusk, dark bats hover  
over that kind of water.*

*And that's the point of dusk.*

To hold a moving crawdad in place, even for a minute.

*But your name is all over the place.*

*Holy Day*

What gift do you want? A box of blackcandy.

A tiny thing to want.

Not a watch, gold chip or junk. Not a trick  
or a catch—only that.

You do own

a ruddy, blooming pout—clock-round—and a young frail pitch.

Your wail may turn into a low-flying auk;

your dial will wax into a flailing owl-flock, nocturnal and giant.

Don't pray for a diamond, a dollar, or any kind of fix—only  
that firm, one want.



## *Spell*

Always, to raise—  
bewitch—this figment—to  
conjure it, ever, because it is conjurable—this figment of you as a boy.  
Day's light weighs down your  
eye's lids, heavy with a luck. To think you up a gun-like prop, to think up it, is not unthinkable, if unlike me. Why not a  
fine sporting hound for you—a slick Saluki or skeletal  
greyhound that drips and foams and goes on, and  
how I could go on, and the going-on would be good—to lope through muck over browned hills.  
I bring this thing up, bring up it, from a kitchen  
jar stuck with reptiles. The brought-uppance of it, of you, is good. My domed  
kaleidoscope, batty from the bringing, fits your perfect skull-shape, which is unlike anything,  
like a thimble. Now you have it on you. Now you have on it. The  
moon's light is there too, and it is helpful in that it casts a  
new glow on each or every of your moles, which are good because they are young  
or because they are numerous like stars. All this going-on about complexion is good but the bring-uppance of  
particular eyelashes is not, because they are untalkaboutable. Pictures, even or especially in the mind, can be  
quietly magicked into being—it is a thinkable thing. On a unrelated note, some levitation is  
real. It would be not unlike me to rise from this  
scene as a glume of wheat, batting at your young leg. That, too, would be good, to  
think myself into what has been called up. The gun and the grass and the hunting dog. Otherwise let it, let you, fall back  
under a crack of fog into a useful container, where it is—that is, you are—  
vaulted, magic-marked,  
wet with a fat  
X. But, never were  
you ever a boy, never small. How could you be, when with a  
zap of your fingertip, you can melt a whole human.

II.  
ONE-ARMED

*The One-Armed Poem*

wears a kind of  
utility apron hung

with combination padlocks  
and tennis bracelets.

She has one good arm to excite  
with, like a suck of lemon.

Her hand shrinks  
into a little boiled leather

mitt, for touching, for handling  
with care in. She wears her body

hair long, loves coverings, loves  
to lisp a description.

A terribling,  
a really unholy thing—

the birth out the back  
of the toad, the little blue man tonguing

the little blue swan  
in the scene in the clean Delft plate.

She has a certain longing,  
your longing, is after dark

all day long.



*An Oracle by Any Other Name, Etc.*

Would sound so slippy.

This time he is the queen, but  
you are still you, so

and so. It is a odd card flips over & over as you sip  
sober, nail-vermeil chipped  
and bony.

Breath withheld, we get figured, felt, by the heat  
of your hand, by *this haloey radiance.*

Gear up, the predictor tells you, disbelieved: a muscle tee on  
is fearless, be a sort of  
man about it. A wick-flicker livens you for a minute, then  
an overlay coats your cup  
with low-grade sadness, mother-of-pearl.

All too real, a little fishy, this flippant stab  
at it. A card unveils the stars,  
a pretty wrist-flit & there you are.

Listen, the queen says you may have essential oils,  
cashmeres, & some old  
romances. It is written on the walls  
of your dollhouses.

This queen didn't know what was what  
until you—you with your fullness, with your flame,  
with your marvelous brains.

*Wool / Water*

The echo has slid, the coat on her  
shut.

*How pretty.* How come  
a woman simply is when she wasn't before.

Which pearl will she put the pin on the coat.

How much note to take, as she undoes herself,  
each clip and glove that will have been put?

But she's not even answered your questions, which.  
They are watery, yes. Slippery, but still.

Consider the o'clock.

The Queen, who bled,  
just after was stuck  
on the brooch.

*Faun*

I didn't choose        this trance,  
not in fleece, or under moon.

You were buying        dance slippers, heels  
Wedgwood Blue, to star in the faun-afternoon.

And I, always after        a goner—phone  
off the hook, numberless emergency  
contact, zephyr                in bland Greek dress—  
am slammed against a fabulous pile of crags and Debussy.

I am athletic        about it.

Turned in a trap, on the hunt,  
why always        the child born backward,  
herded into a month.

*Creature Study*

In the study I am asked to wear  
a head-heavying mask and unhandy glove,  
  
and when the animated spider  
hovers on the screen, to offer it my full compass.

The woman in the room leans  
to breathe a hot mean therapy.

In low light even flowers scare me, starry  
arm-bursts alarming.

Crab-like and reaching, ornamental  
bough, innocent sprig, young spray

of conifer creaturized  
in eyesides.

Like how the shape of her—  
that woman, there—is warped, too, in the terror.

What is it, the way I know her.  
What is it, the shape of it.

I admire the lace outfit of the thing. I have a thing  
for the shape of the calf of the woman.

The virtual spider topples out of a flat urn,  
a displaced bauble overturned on wiggling prongs.

to touch it, touch her  
into space, with five fat fingers I reach out

*The Baby Contest*

The babies are lined up on leggy tables that are festoon-dressed.  
Because lights glow on them their skin warms but not in a fever way.

They are so clean, so soaped and sauna-sweaty  
with minted breath, peach feet.

This one is hunched over like a bag of ice,  
softening under such greenhouse heat.

Her registered name, *Copper Chariot*. Her rash,  
hot and patchy and grounds for disqualification.

They talk about *what a fine coat* and slap  
the fruit-like rump like a sunburn.

From the pink of gum to the glossy dot of nail  
each one waits and is warm as toast.

This is *My Lady's Waltz*, this is *Garland of Petunias*,  
this is *Starry Starry Night* but he peed so he's out.

That is the judge, she is stiff and female.  
She uses her pointer finger and the babies follow.

The babies follow her flappy arm to the very tip  
and march in a line to the arena, or to the door, or to the sun.

*Lenscrafter*

Halved            & through glass  
of violet-hinted water's how I see

you,    night-bloomer  
of the glitter-bodied kind.

A portrait,    a petal  
is sunk into the gentle

red push, pile  
of dead        silks.

You're my wristlet, rapt  
as I count    the ways:

Figure-mover, other-  
eater,    vetiver-head.

A portrait,    a petal  
drunk in the pupil.

Our plosive closeness  
lunged into    a wrest.

*Timestep*

Why get stuck in the mousetrap of looking-back  
when there is wind on the sea,  
in your sleeves, at your back & you could just  
be pushed.

So many lands so simmering,  
orange under your hot shoe. Planes, trains, &  
ashes so it is good to have a cool  
glass of water, or aloe, or purple ink.

Well, in school we were once forced to present valentines  
to arbitrarily-assigned classmates, telling why  
we appreciate them. My valentine-maker announced,  
*Is nice, is smart, treats everyone the same.*  
Now that is a sentiment which can't be faked.  
Nor could any person who is very beloved  
come up with it.

Everyone the same? I will not. Any animal hydrophobic,  
for example, is not to be trusted.  
You, though, are just as lovely, just as loved,  
as some of the more original thoughts I have had.

Be a wonder, dwell  
in the bath with your ear to the glass.  
Hang from the earrings of the decorated sphinx,  
make what you wormed through  
stick to the floor of the world.

*Luckless*

In your spine, in the great knot of the skull,  
the one that steers both handedness and hair-whorl, you feel it:

Two pieces of cutlery meet the floor,  
and company is coming.

If you are a bird then it is good to show beautiful plumage  
and so on, some animal of unfortunate color.

If you must dream of a candle  
let it be blur-bright—a trick one is all right.

As for harps, all fine music is favorable.  
But you're fooling no one with your big necklace of teeth.

Unhand your broom; you are luckless to sweep  
under the moon.

Who knows, it could mean death!  
I only know that you are something else.

Suit yourself in the color of money;  
tap your wallet as the funeral passes by.

*Tenebrism*

So many ways not  
to sleep. In a room peopled with furniture, end-table  
legs get a glow.

Who needs a shadow, in the crown  
of the Medusa-neck lamp?  
In the hell of it.

A shadow's only less valuable, if color means anything  
to you. Spotlit hair-part, thrown back  
by a chest's glass through the hours.

The *curio* can be the ornament  
or its cabinet. A stairway,  
a banister, its bright spot a fontanelle.

There's batting in the bedding  
which is the meat of it. You go under,  
become the delicious material.

An unlikely spelling makes a name more  
authentic. It is that kind of thought  
will carry you to the downright dark.

We have an urge  
to touch the fabric that is least like  
our own skin. And night gets a twin.

*Impose Upon*

Very good, we draw the contour  
eyes-closed and we are praised for it  
for its total madness and leg-  
shapes. We are little valentines rubbed  
in the style of a rubbing  
as done on a penny. In the unlikely event  
of a water-landing we'll all be extra-  
handed for helping. We have our mothers'  
sighs and click-snapping ankle bones  
which announce our being  
in the room, but too, our non-  
belonging in it.

