

Fractured Poetics and Creation

Billy Phillips

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Ted Hiebert

Rebecca Brown

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Abstract

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Billy Phillips

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Professor Jeanne Heuving

The imagination is the human being's core intellectual generative power, but is neglected in Western life. Being more important it is also more dangerous than previously realized. *Fractured Poetics and Creation* is a description of the wrestle with this danger.

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Fractured Poetics: Conceptual Portion

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Fractured Poetics¹

1.

Fear

This is hard to write.

It feels threatening to think about why I write how I write.

I'm afraid that I'm going to taint my writing by thinking about it. So much of the writing is intuitive, I worry about gumming up the process like an athlete who thinks too much of the movements they need to perform and as a result makes errors.

My first step is not to get distance from my work, but to get into the work, get into the workings and heartbeat of it all and describe the torrent I see. I write and then take notes describing the events that take place as I write and see if I can glean something from the process that might be interesting to others.

It is hard to get the discoveries into shape. I've kept track of my findings in small notebooks, furiously scrawled like a war correspondent. I like them being in the notebooks because the ideas are valuable, and the notebooks keep them safe. The notebooks preserve the possibility of how I could write of these things in the future. I'm afraid of writing them down now and risk diluting the revelations. While my poetry and prose is written without fear, my poetics is terrified. If I'm not careful those revelations will remain in notebooks.

¹ My poetics is fractured; my poetics statement will try to reflect that. It's made up of parts that don't always fit together nicely, there are pieces missing. Instead of trying to force my ideas and observations together, I have written them out to reflect this.

I approach the question of poetics with fear.

This is not a bad thing or a shameful thing. As Nietzsche said, fear and danger allow beings to become great beings, danger which “first teaches us to know our resources, our virtues, our shield and spear, our spirit-which compels us to be strong...” (Nietzsche 1990) When we recognize our danger we rise to the challenge, grow stronger, become what is necessary to repel it. I could tell stories about Sartre and authentic being and how you are not yourself when you’re aware of yourself, that you then are acting a role. It would be valuable at some point to talk about Levinas² and ethics, and dialogue as the most ethical relation, but I’m afraid of doing that. Not only would it not provide a complete picture, it might give the impression that I would ever try to give a complete picture.

I read Flannery O’Connor. I’m aware of her feelings about this. They resonate with me, like she’s describing my own experience as if she knows me. “I think that if there is any value in hearing writers talk, it will be in hearing what they can witness to and not what they can theorize about.” (O’Connor 1969) “I have very little to say about [story] writing. It’s one thing to write [stories] and another thing to talk about writing them, and I hope you realize you asking me to talk about story-writing is just like asking a fish to lecture on swimming. The more stories I write the more mysterious I find the process and the less I find myself capable of analyzing it. before I started writing stories, I suppose I could have given you a pretty good lecture on the subject, but nothing produces silence like experience, and at this point I have very little to say about how stories are written.” (87)

² In particular Levinas’ “Totality and Infinity” and as a whole his use of term “Other” to denote the other person coming to the self from on high, more than can be seen, someone revered. As opposed to other popular uses of the term, Levinas stresses the irreducible nature of the Other person, who shatters my conceptions and thus frees me to engage with the world ethically, by drawing me out of my prejudices and misunderstandings.

Lost Mentors

I see in my writing a search for a mentor from the past, someone I cannot seem to find.

And now, after being wounded by the thought of my strength being the very thing that threatens my creations, I want to find them.

It started when I was young. I read S.E. Hinton's "That Was Then, This Is Now." There is a passage in the book where the protagonist and narrator describe a moment of sudden clarity. He says he could see everything. Everything happening around him, his family and friends and school, like everything is in place, and he *gets it*. He just understands. He goes on to say that it only ever happened to him that day, that things got muddy after that. But it's in him now, that memory of the vision, when everything made sense.

I have had that experience. The writer was talking about me, knew me. The experience was described so perfectly. I read more books by the author and kept reading about myself. I looked up S.E. Hinton and discovered she was a woman. She had a different background, different sets of life experiences. She was different than me in almost every way, and yet she knew me like no one else did. She gave words to the frustrating riot of feeling and desires that swarmed me. Instead of being frightening, there was a tremendous relief in being seen by someone so different.

Difference is not frightening. It is alluring, attractive, mystery is wealth.

Now, I need to find the people I was in dialogue with through time, I need contact with those who made up so much of my world.

I was stopped by Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya.

I was enchanted with everything she said, but then we got to the passage, the awful enraptured exquisite passage: "O God! / If I adore You out of fear of Hell, burn me in Hell! / If I adore You out of desire for Paradise, / Lock me out of Paradise. / But if I adore You for Yourself alone, / Do not deny to me Your eternal beauty." (al-'Adawiyya 1988)

The passage initiated a new shattering in my religious life which is where I believe Rabi'a intended it, I would not make a merchant of God and look for fair exchange from him. But the wreckage didn't stop there, it spread to all of my relations and involvements, the idea of equivalent exchange is ludicrous, of using "efficiency" to gauge a relation with another person, as if it can be measured or contained, as if being can be involved in a measurable way. I knew that if a being dreams I will honor that being as more than a trading partner. I didn't know what she would think of this, and was haunted. I went to see her through time and space, wondering what she would think of me, we can't control the effects we have on others, there is distance of time, space, culture, language, pace-(the quickness or slowness of how we process) but the only important thing was that I was looking for her.

But when I found her she did not recognize me as a disciple or student, she gave me some of the water she was drinking, because I was thirsty.

I realized in drinking I was thirsty almost to death and that if I didn't do something my thirst would be all anyone knew of me.

Hildegard von Bingen showed me visions, but she showed the value of vision as well, like the light that reveals itself as it collides with something else. She showed me how to create and honor my creation, and the essential nature of how art can heal. I am just as concerned with what survives as how it survives, how ideas and art can be as critical as medicine or science (Bingen 1998).

I found her in the forest and we were polite but we didn't understand each other, and there was silence. Someone came for her, in need of her help, but they were poor and wretched and sick and a criminal and naked, so the nobles and rich and rulers followed after to make sure they got no help. In her defiance I saw new things, in her heretical service I saw old dank buildings crumbling at the same time she raised her cathedrals, and I had to walk for miles to think of it. I walked so long I was lost, but loved being lost in that way, driven to wilderness by that kind of power.

I wanted to see Shirley Jackson. "The Lottery" is a great story. *The Haunting of Hill House* is an incredible novel. But *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* will transfigure a person, it will rewrite your DNA. I wanted to see her, but was anxious about the encounter. So, outside her house I started up the walk, and then turned and went back to the street. I paced back and forth in the street, and then stood on the walk. After a while I realized that of all people, Shirley Jackson was probably the least appreciative of this kind of behavior. There is a new collection of previously unpublished stories that I'm anxious to read for fear I'll find myself in there, some dark figure pacing around outside. I left, still searching for her, but away from her, because there was no encounter to be had at that place.

Still searching, wanting to see what these teachers will think of my interpretations. The distances between us are too great it seems. But what if they were searching for me; what if I could do a work that reordered constellations so that they had to find me, even if just to see what had happened? What if I conceive and carry and care and give birth to something messianic and bear what comes in my fidelity to it, what if I took seriously my life and stood up to do something more than distract myself until I die? What if the thinkers and writers in my life have taught me well, that everything is alive and means more than it sometimes appears or what the establishment will 'allow' it to be? What if this teaching worked in me, I believed it and acted on it? Maybe I would find them through my dreams, through the intuitive creative capacity we all require to survive. Maybe I would find them dreaming. Or if they found me, maybe they would wonder what I've been up to, the distance between master/disciple dropped in the chasms around us as we breathe as living people, instead of beings who are simply not dead.

How does thinking about them and their responses change what I'm doing right now? How does my search for mentors change the trajectory of my life?

3.

Horror and the New Threat

I realize I am angry.

Even more than the process, I'm angry about how artist-creators have been thought of and how they have thought of themselves, what they allowed their representations to be. All this passion and intellect is not just for entertainment, I'm not a clown. There is anger, but also fear that while I worked joyously in the ether on imaginative originality, that outside of me artists would be

accepting slavery. Doing poetics was like having to come down to earth and defend myself so that I could get back to dancing in the cosmos without fear of what was happening to my body.

For this poetics statement I felt the need to address this. So I wrote a story.

I wrote a story about what I think of as a high form of imagination and the emphasis on creativity. I wrote a story about how creators are necessary to the world, to have artists engaging the minds of people and shaping ideas and bringing to life possibilities and setting fire to the coiling brambles and thorn bushes of mediocrity that to reach for dreamers and poets. I wrote a story about the tyranny of narrative, and my wish to place emphasis on narrative above all other concerns. It is a way of writing where the imaginative is sovereign and the story comes first, no matter what it says. It is an artist's fidelity to their work, to the event of bringing it forth. I wrote about my enemy, the ultra-rationalists whose desire to harness and explain away the world is irrational, is beyond reason's grasp. I wrote about the war we would wage to keep our souls from being censured and broken, the rage we would need to break away from the limits and strictures and forced prostitution of talented creative minds. I even wrote of the danger of the polite influence of collaborator³ artists to whom we must only ever say, "NO." And I wrote about what I called a "chosen naiveté," a refusal to know the world and the beings in the world in any way that was destructive or limiting, regardless of how any authority would compel me.

I wrote this story in response to fear.

And it's a good story; I still think it's true.

But something was wrong.

³ It is important to stress the meaning of "collaborator" here, as in the betrayer who collaborates with an invader against their own people.

The Horror Begins

I admire the Irish warrior poets⁴. For what they were and what they faced. They fought, they were involved, and they were participants- not satisfied with being bystanders, commentators, critics. They valued their words, their oaths, their genealogies, their stories. In their stories was another valuable facet, their memories. They remembered. The past was brought by shocking wind into the present to order and enchant while moving towards the future. They mourned, they lived beyond.

They were embodied

But the warrior poet faced world of many realities, they could be taken to the Sidhe, or the god's realm, without knowing it, change places with gods, be transformed into creatures. They could live out multiple lives like maiden Etain who lived three lives in different incarnations. You could be changed back only to realize you never were what you thought.

You were creators, you wrought, and you conceived and struggled and birthed new life.

In these heroes I see a model a template of life as a creator. These heroes dwell in mortal and immortal realms, their poems are as essential as their actions, their creations are part of their survival. Like food, like drink, like breath.

⁴ The two books that have most informed this section are "The Tain" taken from *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and "Early Irish Myths and Sagas."

Cuchulainn (Koo Hoo Lin) was the greatest of the ancient Irish heroes. He single handedly stopped the raider army in their tracks in the Tain. (The rest of Ulstermen were at home having labor pains. All Ulstermen had been cursed when the king of Ulster had forced a Goddess to run a race while pregnant. The curse was that at their time of greatest need they would feel the pains of labor and be bedridden.) Cuchulainn was trained By Scathach, the greatest warrior of her time, and it was she he showed him how to use the dreaded Gae Bulg, the spear that split inside the enemy so it had to be cut out.

Already I'm drawn. He does things alone. He had the best teacher. He faces the impossible with gifts only he has. He lives fully with mental and spiritual and physical harmony, he acts and sings and remembers and creates.

Now the shadow comes.

Cuchulainn met a stranger who would not introduce himself. He was strong, he was proud, he was a mirror image of Cuchulainn. They fight, and Cuchulainn uses the dreaded Gae Bulg, and only when the young man is dying does Cuchulainn discover that he is he son.

Cuchulainn did everything that had made him great before, only now it crushed him. His consistency killed his own son because he was unaware.

Cuchulainn's son was Scathach's nephew. He learned to kill, learned to use the very weapon to destroy his son from Scathach. I have always wondered what she thought of the incident, what would have happened had Cuchulainn gone back to her. In many ways Scathach is responsible for the full prowess of Cuchulain. What of his use of her gifts?

The Horror is With Me Now

It is the 13th century. Mari Richmont lives in the south of France. She lives alone. She has property. She is strange.

When neighbors ask about tiny huts built out of twigs in the bows of her trees, she tells them that a fairy clan has taken up residence on her property to help her war against invading spirits. People see her dancing as she comes in from the countryside to trade. She tells children to sing so their hearts won't blow out and so the children won't grow into ghouls who never mean it when they laugh.

She is imaginative, she is creative, and she is engaged with the world around her and even in creating it anew.

Then the Inquisitors come.

They listen to stories about Mari. They talk to Mari themselves, and see her noticeable uncomfortable. She begins to avoid them. They write down the things they've heard she said. They stay up nights thinking about her.

She is arrested.

The Inquisitors tell her stories; they tell her how her actions fit into a greater story of witchcraft. They indicate her loneliness as a sign she has been cursed, they indicate her discomfort with them as a sign of her sin. They tell her the sprites who help her against invading spirits are actually pagan demons blocking the influence of the true God.

Because of her, they have been inspired. They are imaginative. They are creative. The very thing that has caught their notice, the ability to tell stories to explain and create the world around her, has inspired a response in them.

There have limited means in the prison cell they are using, and so they dream up new devices of torture to use the materials available. She refuses to confess and even fights back, and fighting back infuriates them more. The more well-argued her defense, the more of a threat she is. Her intelligence actually works against her, her ability to argue, they say, is actually a demonic silver tongue trick. Her strengths assure them they must be against her.

They engage in the very act they are condemning her for, creating and being imaginative. She is a dark muse to them, they are inspired, but in their case it has nothing to do with affirming life, they are unsettled and desperate to silence her.

She is silenced, her property taken.

I have thought about this subject for a while. And I have always, *always* seen myself as Mari. I have actually considered the world around me, and spoken up when I felt responsibility to do so. I have created wonderful things, and used my imagination as more than to embellish the “Real” but to make my reality and bring into existence the emblems of my dreams. And I have been met with surprising hostility.

I have been amazed by the vehemence people can feel for confidence, for living without apology. I have been amazed to see that doing things badly gets little or no attention, but doing

things well, with confidence and difference, is threatening. I have seen angry people inspired by their feelings as if they have been taken over, to do something about it.

What if I have not always been Mari? Isn't it possible to have been the inquisitor? If the imaginative is what I think it is, a human's core generative power, what is there to say that it is always safe? In actuality, aren't I closer in specie to the Inquisitor than the ultra-rationalist? Aren't I dangerous? If something can be used for so much good, can't it then be turned for violence? When I argue for a greater place for imaginative force, aren't I making way for possible inquisitions? The most horrifying danger is not what you don't understand, but what you could be. I have been so confident, so able to see sides, so willing to frame this whole story, but isn't my success making possible my greater crime?

When I look one way, I see the possibility of becoming what I hate. When I look another, I see the possibility that others could use the foundation I'm building to wreak a different havoc.

When I look another, I see my work going out and being misunderstood, and the greater the power of my skill and the greater the damage of the misunderstanding.

In a moment all of my roaring ceases and I'm shattered and afraid to act.

I thought I had the story down, I knew what to fight and what to stand for.

But something else was out there.

The dangers are erupting in front of me. I can't tell which is worse. It's like a revolving dark prism in front of me. Every angle looks worse than the last, when it's the one I'm focused on.

a).The “thing” waiting was like me, it is me. Getting strong enough to topple ultra-rationalist and marshalling this energy I can now wreak havoc and become what I beheld. William Blake warned of those who can topple dictators, warned that the tendency for the victor is to become what you fought against.

b.)No, the danger in this thing we do, for once it goes out into world, what can we do? If creation is so important, then it can go so very badly, and is equally our responsibility.

c.) No, the real danger is not just possibility of my danger, or becoming like my persecutors, but that by not being vulnerable I could not tell the truth I intended in the first place, I could not preserve excess and see clear enough to stand up on the side of the weak. The danger is that I would be blinded without it.

d.)Even being fully alive and resonate with mind/body, /reason/passion makes your more powerful, you can not only replace former dictator, but become something worse. There is a new horror, one we are not ready for, not equipped to fight.

e.) No, the danger is not that I could be monster (accepting all of the blame is a safe strategy to appear non-threatening,) but that there actually is an enemy. This is the thing I am most afraid of. Something actually to be faced that it is not internal. I have written for so long of my loathing for the crusader, taking what I love as a shield for wretchedness and death. What I am most afraid of in the entire world is that there could actually be something to war against because I don't know how to stay me and fight some kinds of battles.

f.)The danger is that I could be right. My story could be accurate, and the responsibility of my choices and the implications, the risk, is actually much greater. The idea that the

danger could be in our head is often comforting compared to the responsibility and real life implication of a actual external threat. When it comes time to go outside and stand up, we sometimes wish we were wrong.

g.) No, the danger is that the more successful we are, the stronger an enemy has to be to beat us. Superbug theory is that our medicine, our antibiotics are saving us for a greater fall, that diseases are building immunities to our best efforts, and that the stronger our medicine the stronger the sickness has to become until we reach a point where we can offer no resistance. Everything I do strengthens the sickness around me, my most brilliant successes are making an enemy I won't be able to face.

h.) No, the danger is that if artistry and creativity are as important as I think they are, then like all important things, from ideas to technological advances, there could be so much damage.

5.

Philosophical Reflection

My chosen vocation is to write for others, to open my heart to strangers and the Abyss.

This idea consumed me when I was reading Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. Both the book and Nietzsche's life, his example of writing with aggression and elitism, *but writing, writing for others*, not marching around the Alps being superior to everyone but speaking to everyone.

Offering to make the first move in engagement, laying an offering down. His words are painful, his ideas are powerful, he speaks with confidence, but he is speaking! The more confidence he

shows, the more he could be made to look a fool. There is risk here. There is something interesting to look at.

When I start of a a book about tragedy I think of performance, scripts, representations, and the distinctions between artists-creators/ and devourers. I approach the question of performance participation with fear. Afraid of inauthenticity. I am already sensitive and frail from my fall.

I am afraid of what Kierkegaard was afraid of, writing in *The Present Age*, about people resigning themselves in cafes and diners to talk about those who are living, rather than living themselves. He worried that people would become commentators and critics and audiences rather than participants in life, and never take responsibility for their views. If he had reason to fear then, we should be living in terror now, for the human state in the West has become one of safe, and therefore worthless, participation.

So I start the book and am thinking about artists, poets, the process of poesis-creation, flowering, coming to fruition. I like Nietzsche's description of a poet, but is it only because his definition is a volatile and passionate definition where I see myself?

“{A} poet is a poet only insofar as he sees himself surrounded by figures who live and act before him and into whose inmost nature he can see. For a genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept. A character is for him not a whole he has composed out of particular traits, picked up here and there, but an obtrusively alive person before his very eyes, distinguished from the otherwise identical vision of a painter only by the fact that is continually goes on living and acting. (Nietzsche 1967)”

The tensions that emerge are remarkable, the way in which the Dionysian frenzy will break down the limitations and false representations to reveal the horrifying truth of the world, for the Greeks (in his story, maybe just for Nietzsche) the meaningless of life, which stuns a being and brings them to their knees. But the Apollonian creative impulse stemming from dream imagination and every human's ability to create and form the images of their dreams, comes in glory as a saving force to *continue the creative act when facing the storm of reality, to defy pessimism and nihilism by creating their meaning*. This story is breathtaking. I don't care for a second whether the Greeks ever really felt this, whether they privileged Apollo or Dionysus in the way he describes, Nietzsche has harnessed a blood roaring impulse and momentum, and that impulse, and the defiance it makes possible, is true.

I wonder what other artists think of this, of the burdens of knowledge and/or wisdom. Of the importance of the creative act. Of creation rather than management, rather than critique. What do they *invite* from their audience? Is it possible to invite the participation Nietzsche argues the ancient tragedies were able to do and, he argues, the Socratic influenced Euripides' plays failed to do?

I keep thinking of this objection/concern. I don't want to impose responsibility Only responsibility picked up, owned, and embraced, can generate the life affirming impulse to forge identity and respond to the other person as Other.

But I have my own concern. Does the artist get to choose?

I am placing art as part of creation, one of the most vital and necessary aspects of being human. Can others involved in other creations forego responsibility? Can a parent sell their child's organs or prostitute the child, and then turn to us and say, "Look, I just don't take my creation

that seriously, it's a responsibility I don't want." Because one may do that, is that something we accept? Is it better when they say, "look, you can think of your creation as important, just don't decide that for me." Are we comforted by that logic?

Do we get to choose the effect we have on others? Is that a viable option, to regulate the ripples you cast in water?

I'm not sure how much of this is a discussion of choice, if creation, and art, are as important as I think they are. When Nietzsche wrote of the redemption of tragic art being done well, I cannot place a lesser emphasis on our own offering, it is just as necessary. I cannot choose whether my body needs bread and water, my opinion on the matter doesn't carry much weight in the face of the reality of hunger.

This is not an exaggerated position, or embellished for effect, but the fullness of feeling as I encounter it. I must describe what I see, even if it hurts and is blinding.

But now I know the temptation to limit our influence if it will also limit our responsibility and risk to ourselves. I cannot indulge that temptation and remain me, but I am left trembling at the consequences, and understand it.

It was in reading "Thinker on Stage" that I started to see some kind of possible response to the horror, the danger. Sloterdijk was writing about Nietzsche, he was writing about creators living boldly because their creations matter. Then he wrote of the responsibility such artists have to be vulnerable. This was an awakening for me. The thinker as artist creates a world from which to speak, a stage from which to present his/her ideas. They then remain on the stage, and have their ideas play out on themselves in a public experiment, remaining visible.

There is a drama of texts, where the works that survive their interpretations speak up after we have figured them out and tossed them aside, where observations and claims and terrors and triumphs of people who are not us become valuable to us. They escape a 2nd death in which they are remembered as less than they are⁵. Why? Sloterdijk argues that Nietzsche himself exemplifies the dual nature he spoke of, that in writing *Birth of Tragedy* he was describing and becoming the dual natured being that will endure and survive the 2nd death interpretations.

I am charged by this idea, that a thinker has (and so another thinker can) constructed a stage “for exceptional disclosures, for cultural reevaluations of the most menacing sort, and for an unheard-of breakthrough into humanism by psychodynamics.”⁶ There is an eruption of feeling for me in the drama of a thinker who has refused to wear one mask and has built a stage where the dishonest real life must be silent while a constructed drama tells the truth. And the presentation is the thinkers own self or coming to self. A becoming and a self-destruction. I resonate in particular with the idea of an artist putting himself on display for vulnerability, for a nakedness beyond nudity, for a formative generative creation of self though dynamism and conflict and the tension between separate parts of oneself. Even the idea that there is in that self not a unity but a dual nature that seeks to accept itself. Why a stage? For Others. This is exciting and frightening, that this egoist would be an altruist by declaring his resistance, that when it is written and on display, when he is on display, that representation is for Others, an ethical relation. It is as if to say, “I hold nothing back when I condemn you, and unleash this mixture of energies on myself as an experiment that will kill me for you.”

⁵ The idea a 2nd death when one is remembered incorrectly is Paul Ricoeur, in “Figuring the Sacred” in the section *Memory and Suffering*.

⁶ Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage* p14.

I want what a creator does to matter. What matters is what is dangerous. I get my freedom and existence from Others (who break me out of my autonomy and give me new possibilities of choice, and choice is where identity is generated) so how can I attack them? The claims and observations and visions are coming, there is nothing I can do about that even if I wanted to, I can't simply blind myself to stop my passionate engagement with our shared existence. So what can I do? I can create without apology and raise my voice for terror and claw at the pillars and chains from a place of vulnerability where I can be touched by any/every Other and all my riotous exertions are seen in my naked flesh. I will be available for touch and response in my wrestling with my own tensions beyond endurance; I will be remade and vulnerable in my creative destruction like a tree standing vulnerable as its own growth and becoming tears through concrete with its roots.

6.

Accidental Saviors,

1.

I am now tired of the Greek violence in the pantheon, the cycle of war between father and child from one generation to the next. Instead of radiating revolutionary energy I see it as a new establishment. From chaos came life, and then Uranus went after his children, to be stopped by Cronus, who warred on his children, to be stopped by Zeus, who warred on his children, and who prophecy says will be overthrown, a practice of exiling fathers to be new tyrants. I loathe the violence of the parent on the child when they see them as a danger, especially because it is the violence that makes them the danger. I want something else. I want to get back to the first parent

who created and let go, the father who did not require his children's death or his creation's suffering, but gave of himself-Chaos.

I often hear something like, "Don't we get stronger by fighting our parents and becoming independents? Won't we make our children stronger by making them defend themselves from us?" Set trials have set outcomes, set tests have set possibilities, and every "freedom" I see is really only one way of being and a single role to play. "Freedom" to a new wing of the prison.

I want something more for my children, I need the Abyss. I will be what gets stronger, I will be what gets back up and tells the truth about my weaknesses and overcome them to be something more.

So I will not exile my father, I will let the momentum of tradition crash into my back and shoulders with my arms extended to keep it from going further, and bear whatever scars with private pride. I will bear the madness of all the psychological wiring of patriarchal conflict and let it short-circuit in my mind and reorder my basic system of thought by my will. I will be Chaos to new birth.

Then I will tear down the altars in the high places BY my creation so they can build whatever temple they wish that I can bask in its shadow. I can tear down whatever conceptual obstacles would impair them, whatever intellectual sickness I encounter before it becomes contagious by letting it war in my body until to escape death I create an antidote from my most fundamental parts.

Then my children will roar past all of my accomplishments (which could also have been prisons) and I can be forgotten, or remembered and valued for what they valued in me, to receive my

meaning from them, *as child gives birth back to parent*. I will do everything so that they can do more, not because I was lesser but because they were greater.

I will it, a radiant unfolding and bringing-forth-it's danger a necessary part of its privilege, to grow and be.

I have found my anchor, the pivot of all that is creative and destructive in me, for what will help them I do and what will hurt them I'll not. It's not in me that I will find my standard, but in my others.

2.

Vulnerability

I have to be able to be reached. Touched. Moved. I can't have what I thought I wanted, which was a castle from which to create and be strong before sallying forth to lift my sword at Monsters and then walls to retreat into for safety. Lurking behind that vision is the Crusades. I must live with the Wild, I have to see what I'm doing. The energy I summon would kill me if it killed something good, and whatever I would be if I killed my own child would beg for death, I cannot live by sacrificing my creations. I cannot risk being blind, I have to risk *my* self so that I can see, and be aware. I can't be me alone.

3.

Jean-Luc Marion *The Erotic Phenomenon*

I do not create my 'self' in thought or find my 'self' in self-reflection [as in Descartes]. Descartes wanted certainty. To doubt everything until he was certain of it. But Certainty doesn't give us what we wanted from it. After certainty there is still question, "What's the use?" Marion calls

this question vanity (from Ecclesiastes, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit”.) Certainty doesn’t locate me. Certainty can’t stand up to vanity and answer the question “What’s the use?” So it leaves me, abandons me, perhaps wasn’t there for me in the first place.

I need to care. I need concern. Care is what makes the world unfold for me the way it does. And I respond to others, to the world, because I care very much. World sings for me and I’m located among the world’s dancers because I love. Love is what answers Vanity. Love gives me more than Certainty, it gives me Assurance, it locates me as a place, I am the place that can be touched, I can be moved, I can be affected and I feel.

I receive myself from the other person. “Because I am insofar as I love and someone loves me, only others will be able to answer. In the end, I will receive myself from the other, just as I am born from her.⁷” I don’t give myself to myself, but ask after my existence. I am touched, reached affected by others. I am privileged above the rest of the physical universe because I have flesh, am flesh, embodies mind. Flesh is unique-not only can I touch and feel other objects in the universe, but can only touch *by feeling myself touch them*. Flesh can touch nothing without feeling itself.

What is so odd is when Marion describes us as a Where, located as a place where we can be touched, not from a pillar where we think ourselves into being, alone and indifferent, but with others, because of others.

If you raise your hand to mine and we touch, I can’t tell where I’m feeling you and where I am feeling myself feel you. There’s no line of demarcation, no percentage “me feeling%, you

⁷ Jean-Luc Marion *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 195

feeling%” There is only the sensation. There is only the touch, feeling and being felt and feeling myself feeling. If I am lover in creative act with holy Other there will be only sensation of touch.

“In the flesh, the interior (what feels) no longer is distinguished from the exterior (what is felt); they merge in a unique sentiment, feeling oneself feeling. (Marion 2008)”

4.

My vulnerability would be what would save me.

But I couldn't achieve this by hurting myself, or humiliating myself.

In a very strange way, to be truly vulnerable and open you have to be strong. If I faked a weakness then only my faking could be evaluated, critiqued, or judged. If I created a mask of 'humility' it would actually function as a shield, a layer of deception that would receive the darts of life rather than me. In embracing weakness and accepting a persona of failure, it is my created weakness that is exposed, not my real one. It's smokescreen, camouflage, it does the opposite of what I want. Only in trying with everything and giving my entire psyche to something and being as strong as possible is my real self exposed, my real self vulnerable.

In fear and weakness I cannot become fearful and weak. I can feel and move through them and be affected, I will not embody them. If I fear danger and make writing safe I will be playing a part and hiding my true being in an armor of accepted weakness.

Let's frame this differently.

Let's say I am in a contention of ideas with another person. On that occasion they make excellent points I can't answer.

I can accept the *advantage of weakness*, and use my creative power to affirm my lesser position.

There is a list of things I could do that in reality are accepting my weakness:

-I can get allies by telling my story and cast my opponent an exaggerated sinister role. In this I can find comfort in numbers and support from people who weren't there at our argument and probably don't care.

-I can tell lies, use powers of observation to include enough recognizable details to be believed, use powers of storytelling to make a compelling believable story against my enemy, so that if his argument can't be beaten head on, it will flee when its champion is torn down and disrespected.

-I can use talents to tell myself stories about what "really happened" and convince myself of a victory.

-I can change my value system so that what makes my enemy seem superior is actually a blight that makes him inferior (trans valuation of values).

But if I want to tell the truth about creative power and then face the horror of that power, I cannot do these things.

If I accept this advantage of weakness I will become it, embrace it, run in to its arms and have it soo me and rename me. But it wouldn't be me. This would all be constructed, shoddy workmanship with poor materials. What I actually want is to be stronger. To become more, to overcome.

Say "No!" Lift up my head, refuse to cower, but speak, and then speak well, pass by the illusion of strength in talking it into reality by learning how to learn, achieving. With real strength, real ability I will think-the gift, to *think! Be affected and think and wrestle and see though enemy eyes*

and decide-and then defend my opinions and my right to have them. Then I will not apologize for speaking confidently when I have earned confidence with time, with care, because I allowed myself to be touched by the responses of the world around me.

7.

The Eagles and the Wolves

A man is visiting southern Asia on behalf of an NGO. He loves the place, loves the food, and loves the wildness of the area. In particular he becomes obsessed with the Golden Eagles of the region and how they are used for hunting wolves. The eagles are smaller and lighter than the wolves, the wolves are ordinarily the top of their food chain in the area, but the eagles can hunt them. It is a defiance of the rules of power. The man sees it as a defiance of fate. The eagle's scream as they descend on the wolves is 'blood curdling'. Many times the eagle does not pierce the wolves' heart on their descent, and lies on their own back as they not only fend off the wolf, but beat it in the encounter. Sometimes they are hurt, sometimes they are vulnerable, but they still defiantly persist and succeed.

The man is named Markas, and as he is in town one day he notices a gathering. He has lived there for a year, and knows what the gathering means. Public punishment. He goes over and sees two young girls being shown to the crowd right before they are to be caned. They are thieves.

They were stealing from the supplies Markas NGO has provided. He steps in to intercede. He is a representative of the NGO and has no quarrel with the girls, the caning is not necessary. Town officials assure him that it is, there has to be a public example of the consequences of theft.

Markas knows also that criminals that are publicly punished are made untouchables, cultural

outcasts afterwards. The girls look emaciated; he does not believe the smaller one would survive the caning. He attempts to bribe the officials and is told the caning is necessary to save face. He insults the officials for being cowards to punish someone so much weaker than themselves. One of the officials spits and accuses him of meddling. If he wishes, he can try to pay one of the girl's family members to take the caning for them.

Markas volunteers to take the caning instead.

Not only must he take the lashes for both girls and require medical attention immediately afterwards, he will no longer be able to work for the NGO and will be an untouchable. They bring the *samset*, the wooden pillow for the head of the victim and he is laid down. The crowd begins to taunt him. The two girls look down at him with disgust. The caning begins, and it is horrific. The official Markas tried to bribe then insulted takes great relish in the lashings. Then Markas is led away to NGO headquarters to be dropped off.

He is in recovery for only a short time before he begins to get visits.

The visits are from the NGO's representatives, assistants the ambassador, a couple of his colleagues, and several journalists.

“The details of the crowds' reactions do not show the attitude of most of the countries citizens. We know that many the nations' people protested the treatment. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to talk about people raising their voices on your behalf from the crowd that day, for if those people had been in the town they surely would have.”

“We are concerned about the religious history; this could look like a volunteered martyrdom for the sake of your faith. It might be better for all concerned that we say that when you protested

what was happening to the girls that you were taken and beaten as well for interfering, play down the volunteering.”

“We have the girls here. We’d like to tell people about how they stood by you during your ordeal, how you are their hero, and how because of this event they will be given greater education and will work on behalf of bridging our two cultures. They have been cleaned up and are eager to get some pictures with you.”

“We are concerned with the image of a strong white man taking a beating for smaller native girls. I’d like to tell the committee that it was a boy and girl, and stress the fact that it was the unfairness of the punishment that is the issue.”

The interviews are like a second lashing, and when he was left alone, he sighed, closed his eyes, and fell into a deep sleep, dreaming of eagles.

All that mattered to him was that no one should be beaten like that, and no one should stand by and let it happen. So much of what was important to others didn’t even occur to him.

He has a choice about what to do afterwards. Will he stay true to what happened and allow the event to be wrestled with as it was? Or will he warp the event in order to be taken seriously and keep people involved and interested in him.

I would argue that being true to the event does not mean you don’t want dialogue or that you don’t want to hear how your work is received, that you refuse responsibility. Opening yourself up to the honesty of the experience actually makes you more vulnerable, the dialogue comes quicker. There are greater reactions to honest work and those reactions invite more honest responses.

I have felt that difference when I read through material I have changed to fit a particular groups expectation, and when I've read something I created in dynamic event, with my only thought or concern was fidelity to the creation. The responses told me everything.



I have been saved by my work. I wrote because I had to, the story came from within, and only later can I look at it and draw conceptual gems from it to write a poetics paper. I was faithful to my imagination, and now am enjoying the depth of thought it brought me.

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Torwing

There's been no word from the Torwing facility
too dangerous to go to
too dangerous to be involved with at all.

Agnes

We found Agnes at the feet of the Statue of -----

She had found new limbs

arms and legs that worked better than her own

and she was sewing them to her tattooed stubs.

As I walked closer and she got larger in my sight

I saw that she was stitching

not with surgical suture thread but

fishing wire

and it was burning her.

“Agnes!” I said

“What are you doing?”

“Making a moral judgment.”

“I am about to be so happy

with parts that aren’t mine.

I feel it should hurt

when you get something so good.”



Hazel

“I can’t find her” said the Doctor.

We were disgusted with him
left him to wander his white walls
to breathe in the sterility alone.

We went outside and saw glimmers of Hazel
hiding behind trees
and pulling leaves on top of herself in the yard.

Glimmers here, and there
They’re always fuzzy
so I think the glimmers are her memories.

But later, on the roof of the tool shed
we found a blanket, bread crusts, and some stiff handkerchiefs.
It hurt to think of Hazel crying alone.

I saw one of her memories
rubbing her arms in the cold.

Then I quit watching
and set fire to the tool shed.

Tabitha

My hair floats in front of my eyes
and all the light is twisted
some sounds are muffled
and others are louder
and everywhere is my heartbeat.

It's only been brief moments
But I can't bear it.
I need to breathe.

But as I come up for air
there is a face resting on the cold cast iron.
"Tabitha!" I say
"I prefer to bathe in private."

"I've come to say good-bye
I'm going to live in the lake
I've learned to breathe underwater
And it's so exhausting on land."

I lift a pruned hand to squeeze her fingers
then rub my middle knuckle on the back of her earlobe.
"I'll miss you
and come see you
for brief moments at a time."

Lucille

Oh, but her laugh was contagious!

I swear I searched her out in the halls
to find her and feel that laugh.

She was on the pillar that looks over the amphitheater
and I was moving towards her.

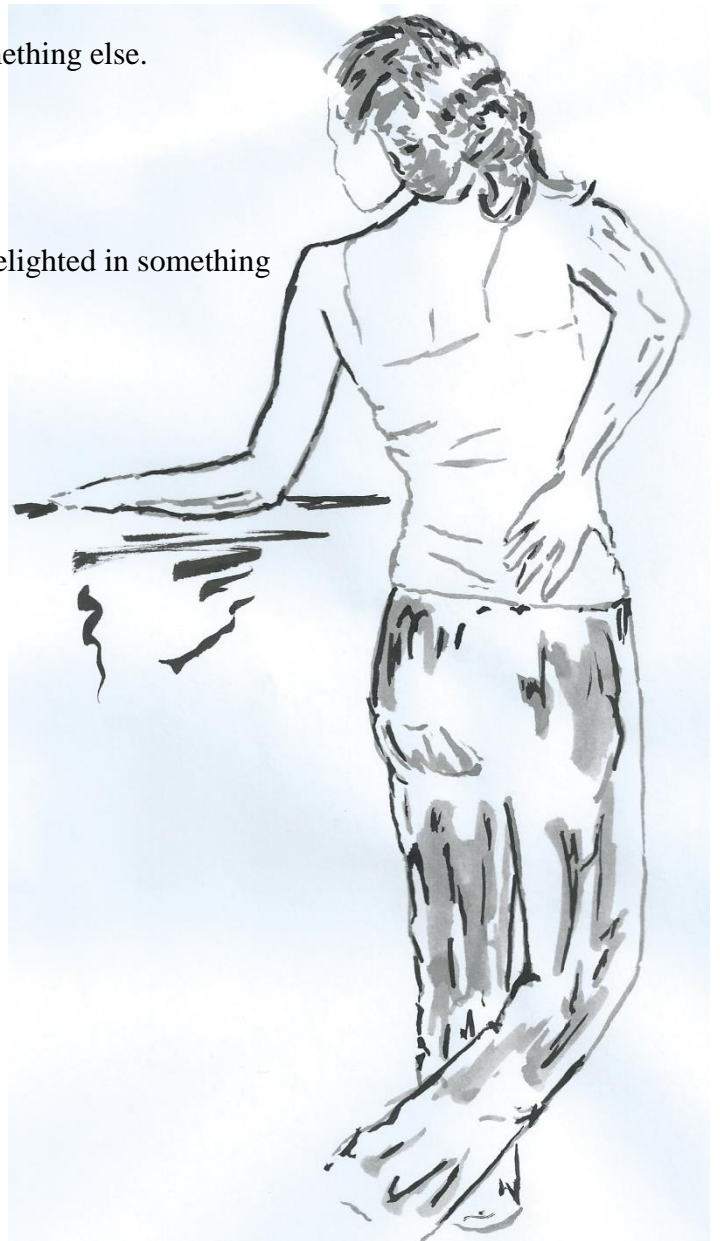
I'm not lying, I was,
but I had to stop and sit and pretend to look at something else.

Her laughter got louder
like she was turning her head towards me as she delighted in something
and then the laughter stopped
and there was some silence
and then some muffled padding
and then I turned and she was next to me
with reproving eyes *and* a mischievous grin.

“Being miserable is easy,
gladness demands that you defend it.
Gloom is peace,
joy is eternal warfare of the mind.”

I want to be around Lucy more.

I need to get myself together
so she'll want to be around me.



Francesca

Francesca left last night.

“I’ve got sons who are lost and need me!

What would I be

if I cared about my vineyards now?” she wept.

Mina

It was the bellowing that woke me up,
angry voices calling in despair.

I went out to the fields

I saw cracks in the earth

I heard voices calling from the ground.

I could almost see the words and letters
as a red mist rising from the riven soil.

“Shame! Arrogant Shame!”

The haze was creeping,
gathering around the largest Oak I’ve ever seen.

And swinging from silk tied to the branches
was Mina
with her eyes closed.

Tendrils of mist were slithering and trying to hook her,
but her swinging feet rushed through
and as much of the red that poured towards her evaporated
over and over.

I saw her open her eyes
and her bliss
shook me to my knees.



Pearl

Pearl took my face in her hands
and kissed my forehead.

“Don’t follow me,
I’m going to have children in the wild.”

“But won’t you need somebody?”

“After. You can come after.”

So I waited until the moon bled
and set out to find Pearl.

I went carefully, carrying my gift,
gliding through the trees and the night.

Until I saw the eyes.

They glowed and glared and surrounded me.

I knew I couldn’t go further.

So I lay my gift in front of them
kissed my hand and placed it on the parcel
and then stepped back.

Some of the eyes turned.

Some kept watching.

As I moved backwards I saw tiny hands reach for the gift
and several soft children’s voices sounded for the first time
from all around me saying, “Thank you.”

Constance

Ah! No! This boredom, it hurts!

I've been spoiled on God's visions.

But here, waiting, it's all tedious

and I'm sick of the sound of the clock.

Constance comes in and throws the dishes off the table.

They're broken, and now I won't have to wash them.

"See what I've done!" she says

as she pulls out a board and pieces she carved herself.

She places the pieces carefully in some special order.

I'm confused.

"I've invented a game."

Her eyes are lit.

"You want to move behind **the other pieces**

without getting in the line of fire from their eyes."

She looks at a piece and it lifts up and hovers and then it comes down

"There! You see? That was a good move

I took two pieces with one-"

"I can't do that!"

"It gets easier, you just have to learn the game

and when you get this **I'll attach the second board and show you these two headed pieces-**"

“No, I can’t lift them up with my mind!”

She frowns into my eyes

“Of course you can!

Now about the intricacy of these **board tiles**-“

“I can’t!”

Constance closes her eyes in exasperation

reaches over

and brings her fingers down my arm.

I shudder

and lift three pieces off the board.

“Ok, one of those is mine, you only need one.

Put it there on the red and black tile.”

I comply.

“Now!” says Constance,

her smile filling her face,

something being sacrificed and burned in her eyes.

“Now!” says Constance

as she pulls out more carefully carved pieces

“Now **I’ll really show you something!**”

Ethel

Where is the nitrogen?

Where is the iridium?

Where are the machines from the lab?

Ethel has them.

She's making homunculi.

She's making things with love that she'll love
that won't love her back.

She says,

“When I die

I want to meet God as an equal.”

Helen

I'm not breathing so good.

The barn is demolished.

There are torn up trees everywhere.

There are animal bodies.

And sudden spitting pits of acid.

Helen is leaning against a post

and there's blood caked on her face

She's looking steadily at me

I think she's been awake longer than me.

"I want to end it here." she says.

"If you change into an animal, I'll hunt you down

if you try to run I'll follow

and if you try to beg I'll kill you out of spite."

"Helen!" I say

"You talk too much."

Matti

Matti taught me to bear being misunderstood.

Matti taught me to hide in others fantasies.

“They won’t touch you here.

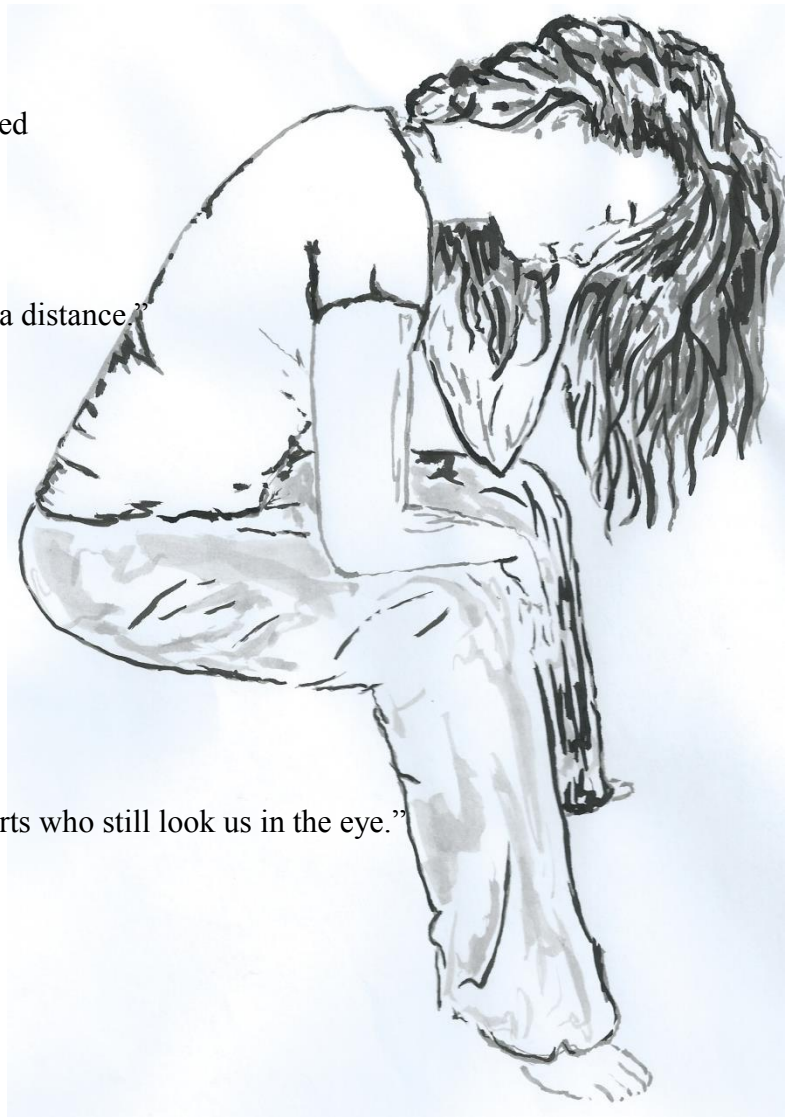
They won’t dare to risk
shattering something.”

Matti taught me that we shouldn’t be ashamed
for choosing to be separated.

“Sometimes love for one’s people is best at a distance.”

Matti taught me to be alone.

“We’re not simple,
what we feel isn’t simple,
and after we mourn
and get up from being crushed
we will be better to those with shredded hearts who still look us in the eye.”



Faye

I was at the tanks
conducting tests with sound and lights
and recording the responses of the entities within
when someone stopped by and whispered
that my name was scratched onto one of the pylons.

I hiked out past the trees and climbed the ugly hills

and there on one of the pylons was my name
and next to it was Faye's.

I looked around I couldn't see her no one could see her when she didn't wish
to be seen.

But I wanted to see her.

I wanted to touch back.

I looked around I paced back and forth I sat

I stood I sat I rubbed
my hands

I rubbed my arms I closed my eyes

I didn't know what to do.

Then I opened my eyes and went back to the tanks

I got the mic and adjusted the speakers, spoke into a loop to reverberate in the deep and wherever
the deep goes-

“Faye.”

Lara

*Girls that dance and people that play music
are like bilingual poets
who translate inside and can read
what is forbidden to me.
They have this talent, I have my longing
and now we are lover and beloved without introductions-*

Suddenly I look up.

Lara is smiling.

“What was...what?”

“You were saying something beautiful.”

I look down and frown and then look up again.

“I was reading your work.”

Lara smiles bigger.

“And you were doing it so beautifully.”

Squeezing my hand, she goes out to the portico
and looks out at the upended ocean.

The rain is more interesting at sea,

constant shattered reflections,

spiteful mirrors

and something that reminds me of something else and shows me something unexpected.

And then she's gone

just when I had so much to ask.

.

.

.

.

But there's time

there's always time here

and when Lara comes back from wherever she's really going

she'll have something beautiful for me to read aloud.

Annalise

Annalise steals into my dream
and makes the animals talk to me.

I can tell they don't want to
and I tell her that

but nobody listens to me in my dreams.

Bernice

I put platinum plaits in Bernice's silver hair
while she's sleeping.

She looks gorgeous.

She gets mad when she wakes up
and questions everybody about it.

She's never guessed me.

It's hilarious.

Peggy

I'm going to find Pegs.

“Tell me what you keep putting in this soup!”

I want to know if I'm poisoned or healthy

which gives me the right

to use my NOT PLAYING voice.

I'm going to take her shoulders,

we'll lock eyes

and I'll say,

“It's all right, you can tell me.

I won't be angry if you tell me the truth.”

Pegs is going to melt, she'll confess everything.

It will be so cathartic that

anyone watching will be renewed.

Then I find Pegs.

she locks eyes with me.

“Why didn't you tell me you've had trouble sleeping?”

I say I don't know, “I'm sorry...”

She winks and runs to the kitchen,

she laughs over her shoulder.

“I know just the thing!”

My wide eyes narrow.

I chase after her.

I'm not going to let her out of my sight until I remember what I was going to say to her.

Marjorie

Marjorie got back
from flying through
the nation's great cities.

She looked tired, so
I'm letting her nap on my bed.

Now I'm seeing all of these scars.

Tomorrow I'll ask her if she wants me to heal them.

You have to ask.

Some people are funny.



Brandy

“Will you sit for me?

Will you wear this dress?”

My palms always itch when I think people are staring at my ankles

And I hear Voodoo drums and want to dance

whenever I wear summer dresses.

“A little to the left, if you would.”

I’ve been thinking of cutting my hair.

I wonder if I have the neck for it

My canines are going dark.

“Could you come forward, just a bit?”

I feel chill on my lips.

Did someone else come in?

Where could I get something to drink?

“You can rest your head on your arms if you like.”

I see a tray with a leftover roll.

I haven’t been getting a roll.

I think someone’s been taking mine.

“Why don’t we take a break, stretch out a little bit?”

I go to the canvas.

I’m overwhelmed,

but maybe it looks like I’m frowning because

Brandy says quickly,

“You remind me of my daughter, I need you to help me

paint her the way she would look if she were alive.”

Hushes

satin

clear eye

blink

and a warmth that spreads and startles

an ignition that makes me want to sit down.

Hilda

Hilda sings this beautiful song
every time she takes away somebody's cancer.

When I ask her afterward where I can get the song,
she asks, "Why?"

I'll sing it whenever you want!"

I want to own it
to possess it.

I don't know if I should be embarrassed by that or not.

Dorothy

We made lines by the dock when the boat made port
and Dorothy stood at the edge
to help open the cargo doors.

There was always a stinging tension when the facility was made into an emergency hospital,
but that day was different.

I think we all knew it.

“Take the birds in first,” she said.

We took crates of birds up to the clinic
birds with broken wings
birds with missing eyes
and birds with cracked beaks.

“Be careful with the stretchers,” she said.

Chimpanzees, orangutans, and little howler monkeys.
Some gripped their stubs.
Other’s heads rocked back and forth,
their eyes rolling in medicated daze.

“I want these in the lobby for now,” she said.

Large cats with burns and brands,
several goats with chain locks through their jaws
and a blind dog that smelled rotten

and wagged its tail as it was led.

We went to the back of the storage container.

It was there we saw the bull.

Its eyes...

the gore of its horns...

from its mouth...the...the terrible...

Dorothy stared into its eyes.

The bull stared at us all.

Dorothy fell and trembled, all the while looking. . .

She lifted her hands like she was getting a gift

and her weeping was out of breath.

“take...

“take-

O Dorothy, you shook so bad.

That’s why I tried to cover your eyes.

“No!

I need to feel this!”

Francis

Oh, I was lost in thought when it happened.

Walking,

humming maybe,

when the abyss shook the sea

and it's maelstrom mouth took over the clouds.

The monolith rose.

I dove in and swam

seeing great masses of things in the deep

moving towards the building.

Climbing on the dais where Francis was standing with her hands raised.

I stood at her side

and was silent

while she finished bringing the monolith to where she intended.

“My mother, she made me, she didn't make much else,

every memory is stained with her self-denial.

But this

this would have been something

it would have taken her breath

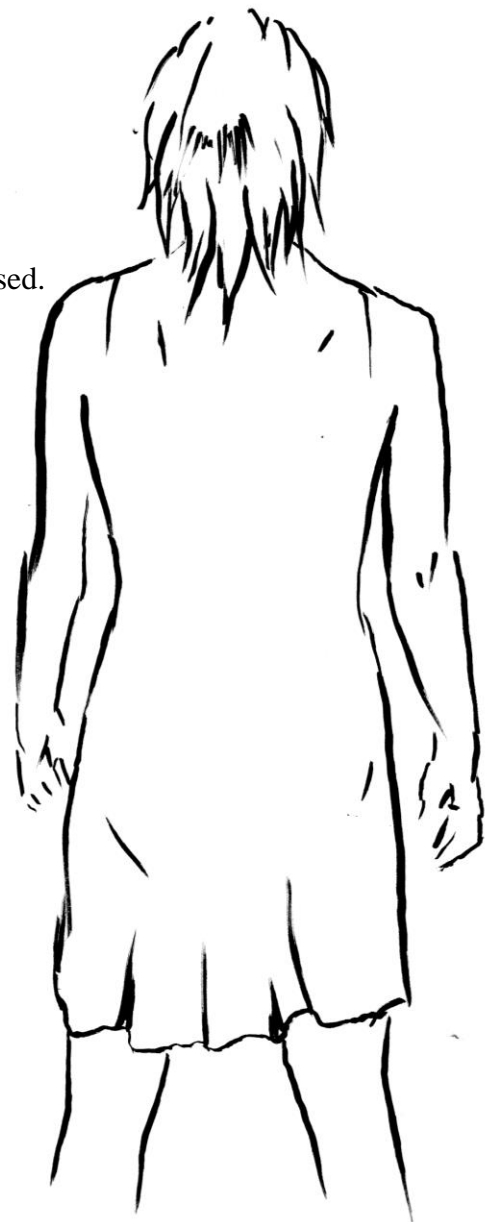
taken her words

and she would have covered her mouth to keep from going empty

and she would have sat down

and she would have marveled at what I can do

when I think of her.”



Shonna

I think I've only ever seen Shonna.

We haven't spoken yet.

I'll wait

but I'm scared

something vital will be lost for me

if I never really hear her,

her Word,

all of that Word.

I don't think I could say that I would die

but something would.



Amy

The red knight and the purple knight dueled in the courtyard before they killed each other.

The purple knight gained an advantage to slash the other's neck at the cost of revealing his chest.

He received a slash that opened his heart and lungs

He crawled to his enemy and died keeping the birds from his body.

The lights went up

the music began

and we all enjoyed each other's costumes in the Masquerade.

I saw Amy.

I knew it was her.

I could tell by the way she crafted her ensemble.

She knew me

and applauded my mask

as we stood amidst the dancers and the revelry.

“If we know already, we can speak without masks, can't we?”

We stood motionless with the flurry of color and increased heartbeat of imagination around us.

“Well, we went to such effort; let's wear them a little longer.”

And so we stood

in the joy

just a little sad.



Emmi

Emmi told me the other day
she saw herself in my work.
She told me she felt like a creator
when she saw me.

I told her she was terribly mistaken, and confused.

That night, in dream
in living vision

She came, wrenched my head down
and whispered into my ear.

I staggered away
the words coiling in me
with pain
with snarling pain

I collapsed, convulsed, arched
and held my belly.

As I was torn and revealed
my skin retreated, my ribs laid bare.
Emmi came to me again
and began to inscribe words and symbols on my bones.

I almost became a child in wanting to plead for mercy
but I came to myself
screamed
and plunged my hands into her middle.
For a moment was tempted to carve my own words with my nails.

But I stopped
and surrendered to my dread
and woke up.

Saw myself
and felt awe.

Instead of taking her rib I broke it and left it
and the flesh did not close up

Emmi and I stared at each other.
I left first.

Sarah

I built an altar and offered prayer.

I fed a fire that tore into the clouds.

Then I went in search for more pleasing wood to burn.

In the woods I saw Sarah.

She was searching for wood as well.

We eyed each other, and I lost her

but when I found the wood I wanted to burn

she was there

prying it from the ground.

We did battle on the plain

and I came back to my fire in a daze

knowing now there were so many colors and intensities of flame

with which to roar through the nights.

I fed the fire with the shelter I had built for protection

and when she came looking for me

she squinted at the blaze, and had to fall back to the trees.

“I’ve loved you so long,” I yelled, “that I’ve received new names!”

“How can you know that!?” she yelled back.

Dumbstruck

I lifted my arms

and motioned to the fire

engulfing me.

Margot

.

.

.

.

.

Margot read about us in some ancient Sumerian text.

.

.

.

I asked her to tell us the ending.

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She said she wasn't sure she wanted to translate it.

She said she'd get back to me.

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.









Torwing End

Dolls

Ileah Minus had already gone mad-

excluded her family from her will, sicked dogs on the family lawyer and burnt down the family summer home-

when she had all of her gold melted into small bars, and, together with her precious stones, sewn into the bodies of her favorite dolls.

She then sent the dolls to strangers.

It all became a family legend, and many people searched at great expense for the dolls.

I don't know if it was simply from being sought after, the force of being adored, but all of the dolls came to life.

The found each other, meeting at Ileah's deathbed just before she passed.

They weren't sure what to make of her.

Then, they met the family.

At first they enjoyed being alive, and I mean that, they loved life and interaction and every part of being sentient. But very soon they found that being objects of desire they were never spoken to very respectfully, with any measure of intelligence. It seemed that being desired they were thought to also be possessed, owned.

The dolls got so sick of it all that they burned down the family's main house and left.

Now, as if to get revenge on their maker, they live in Wallyhuck, Ontario, and teach free courses on Metaphysics.

Shapeshifter

Chari Ann could turn into any animal she wished, and live as one of them in the wild, but she didn't do so very often because it made her husband insecure.

"I just don't know where I fit in the world when you leave." he said.

Chari took this seriously and thought for days about how to respond.

There were embarrassments, occasionally. Once his family had come to visit and was eating together on the veranda. Chari was late and they were in the middle of the main course when she returned, as a Grizzly, sat down next to her husband and absently started to gnaw on the veal. His parents screamed incomprehensible screams, and his sister told everyone for days that terrible things happen to people who eat veal.

Together and alone the two of them had very happy moments, but Chari was always called away by a feeling, a restlessness, and a desire.

One day, she felt she knew how to explain it to him.

He had come home and was wandering through the house when he saw the most beautiful mare outside, walking through the garden like she owned it, because she did. He didn't feel so distant at that time, and started to go outside to see how she was feeling. After a thought he returned to the kitchen for a couple ripe apples and a celery stick.

But when Chari saw him approach she walked out of the garden and turned into a pig. Not even a Lannister pig, with long eyelashes and winking eyes, but a gorged and slobbery collar sow.

Her husband did cover his eyes with his right arm and turn his head away, but to his credit, he also extended his left arm towards her, offering the produce.

Chari stepped forward with purpose, and began to speak.

"What I need you to understand-no thank you dear, I'm not hungry. What I need you to understand is that you protect me, and allow me to be what I am.

"Think of when my folks come to visit, looking for any slip of speech or absent minded moment to come down on me, to humble me, to make me apologetic and embarrassed to be what I am. I'm so foreign to them, I think so differently and I'm such a threat.

"You allow me to be vulnerable. And sometimes I am, sometimes I have to be! Because I have to know what the creatures feel, I have to understand. Sometimes that means coming home in a daze, tired, weak even, as I try to make sense of it all. Not only do you not lie in wait to crush me, you give me the space and the time to understand the graceful as well as the hideous, the frightening and the admirable."

She walked towards him as a woman full of vision, and he held her.

“Sometimes it hurts me, sometimes I’m confused. But I have to know. I can see what others won’t because you’re with me. That’s at least a part of what you are.”

He nodded to her, but couldn’t find any words. She smiled and kissed him and walked into the night. After a minute of silence he looked up suddenly inspired as to what to say, the perfect thing. But she was a griffin roaring into the sky, and he knew he’d have to wait.



The Barn

Arena Kile has something in that barn.

When her father died Arena rebuilt the roof of the barn and got a new door put on. Her mother soon took sick and passed, no one knows how. She lives alone in that house. No one is allowed near the barn.

There is something wrong with the place now.

There are heavy repetitive sounds that come from the barn, and jarring clangs can sometimes be heard. Some nights there are loud screeching noises followed by crashing echoes, as if sheets of metal were being sheared or torn and dropped to the ground.

When Arena comes into town, in passing she mentions places and people no one has heard of, stops when she see the looks she elicited and then smile and goes on her way. Rumors are constantly flying about her private doings on the farm. She receives visitors gracefully but has never been forthcoming about her plans or what she spends her time on.

“She seems busy in a way no woman should be. Not busy maybe, but *concerned, preoccupied.*”

There are dogs on the property, massive powerfully built animals that roam over the farm. They never bark at the people that pass by the road or come for a visit. They watch them.

Then there's the creature.

Tenke Wilson had a donkey on his farm that was too stubborn to be of use. After a time it wouldn't even come in with the livestock during a storm or feed with the other animals, and it certainly never heeded Tenke Wilson. It roamed over the acreage doing whatever it pleased and

made Tenke look like a fool. Everyone he knew laughed at him and his “devil cursed’ donkey. So he had some boys out to his place one day and, with a drunken slur, Tenke told them they could hunt his donkey on his property, stalk the animal wherever it was hiding and kill it. The boys tracked the donkey over Tenke’s considerable plot, but that afternoon one of them he slipped down an embankment by the creek and broke his leg. When his friends had their hands full propping him up as they started back the donkey charged them and slammed into one of the boys, breaking some ribs. The donkey kicked another boy viciously and bit the boy who had broken his leg. That night the boys made it back to the farm house wounded and miserable and calling for help. When Tenke came out of the house and saw the boys he upbraided them, calling them cowards and fools. From the darkness behind the farm house the donkey came at Tenke. The boys say they were getting away too quickly to see what happened, but when some neighbors went out to Tenke’s place the next day they found him trampled and dead.

Two weeks later someone saw the donkey on Arena’s farm. Since then it’s been seen regularly on the property, always around the barn and anxious of anyone who gets too close.

A truck came out to Arena’s place from the city on delivery. They brought Lisa Mills with them from town, she rode along to show them where the Kile place was. Lisa says the delivery men unloaded the boxes in front of the barn but didn’t go inside. When one of the men asked about the donkey, Lisa says Arena smiled, but said she didn’t know anything about it.

Jeffery Parker and Randall Neuhauser both tried to court Arena after her mother died. They were both refused. Jeffery and Randall took on a sickly look at around the same time, and one day they sighted each other in town and began to brawl in the street. Since then the two men have been feuding.

Arena keeps secrets.

Jesse Sims was trying to learn to fish with the older Tanner brothers when they grabbed him and held him under the water a bit. They said it was for fun and to toughen him up. When they took him out he was shaking and moving around “unnatural”, one of the boys said he had the devil in him and they ran. The Tanner brothers brought back Parson Ebbs and Lydia Haystock, but when they got there Jesse was just fine. He was sitting there in the tree above the river with a basket of fish looking down them all like he didn’t know what they were going on about. Lydia says when they came back from the river she saw Arena with one of her dogs walking back to the main road. Jesse brings his fish to Arena, and sometimes he stays up there all afternoon. The dogs welcome him when he comes.

Arena was asked if she’d seen Jesse that day by the river.

She responded that she was one of the only ones to really see the boy.

“He’s is bright and imaginative. Have *you* ever truly *seen* that boy?”

When one of the Tanner brothers, Trevor, later fell down a collapsed mine shaft he called out to his brothers and friends that there were hounds in the shaft with him, and “please to God” get him out of there. It was hours before they could. During that time his shrieks and pleas began to talk about the boy with “lit up eyes” down in the mine and he pleaded with his friends to keep the boy and his eyes away from him. They finally got him out of there when they found some men fixing the railway track who brought rope to lower down to him. It took a while to get him to tie the rope around himself. As they pulled him up out of the darkness Trevor stared out at nothing. He lay limp in the rope like a broken doll. He doesn’t speak at all now.

Even when the weather is dry, when it gets dark there is a mist that covers the Kile property.

There are sounds that echo through the night, machine sounds that frighten the neighbor's animals, sounds that don't seem to fit with the woods and streams.

Sounds from the barn.

Parson Ebbs went out to the Kile farm to address some of the darker rumors he'd heard about Arena. He was up there for two hours. When he came back he didn't say anything to anybody, just sat forlorn by the creek below the church for most of the day. That Sunday Parson Ebbs preached about Peter and his vision of the unclean food. Peter was told by the Lord to eat food Jews weren't supposed to eat. "But when the Lord commands us, we give up our superstitions, and even embrace what we thought at one time to be impure." He then blessed a new baby with the name Arena, a common enough name in honor of the Christian Martyrs who died to entertain Rome.

The Grey Willows Wives came out to the farm to visit with Arena and lend a hand to correcting some of the habits she exhibited that they felt were disturbing her neighbors and the concerned folks from town. Lydia Haystock was with them, and the Charter's head Carol Thompson. Lydia later said that when Carol was sternly reproving Arena's secrecy and her contempt for moral uprightness, Arena had smiled softly at Carol, nodded, and asked them if they'd like to see her garden. Behind the house there is a gate leading into a walled portion of the woods, and if you go far enough there is a clearing where Arena has been tending what is, according to Lydia, an exquisite garden. Lydia and most of the Wives loved the place, but Carol Thompson wouldn't set foot near it. She looked on as Arena showed the Wives some of the flowers and fruit bushes she'd been tending. When Lydia decided it was time for them to go,

none of the Grey Willows Wives could find Carol. Heading back to the house they called out for her in the woods. When passing the gate that guards the path to the garden they saw Carol by the side door to the barn. She was surrounded by dogs. None of them were barking or growling, none of the dogs looked menacing, but Carol froze in fear and Arena had to lead her away by the hand. Arena whispered encouragement to Carol and patted her wrist. The Wives helped her away. Lydia says that she saw Jesse Sims watching them go from the front of the barn, and that Tenke Wilson's donkey stood next to him.

Adam Tanner and Reginald Clark were drinking on the Tanner porch when Carol's husband came by to tell them of his wife's strange visit to the Kile place. Adam and Reginald were outraged, and after collecting some things they went off on horseback to burn down Arena's barn. A crowd of family and neighbors gathered at the Tanners to decide whether or not to follow them. By the time the crowd had decided not to go, Reginald was already riding back with Adam lying over his horse. He had been hurt. There was tar on his eyes, and Reginald yelled out at the crowd to bring some things up to the room to scrape the tar off of him. The crowd buzzed and shouts went out that a party should go back to the Kile place and find out what had happened. Reginald came out to the mob fired a shot into the air, and told them they weren't going to do nothing of the kind. He said that Adam had done it to himself. He couldn't explain why. He could only say that they had been separated on their approach to the barn, and Reginald had been chased by the donkey down to the road. Riding through the woods looking for Adam he'd found him limping through the mist, blinded by tar. Reginald said Adam kept calling out for his dead parents and about "changing winds".

At this mention Adam called out from the room upstairs, he screamed like he was being cut on. he came to the window and all could see what he'd torn from his face with the tar.

“Strange wind is blowing down on us, Mother! Strange wind amassing and we're going to be different from now on! Mother! There's a change coming down like a killing storm, a changing wind is on us!”

Icith

I have this fragment of something, a poem

And I'm afraid

I'm afraid that I use its old language like a shield

from it, to hide from it

to not listen.

I've had it awhile.

It invites me to something terrible

some new kind of person.

I'm afraid of that person.

There are some days when everything I know to use to comfort me fails

and I'm heartsick.

I look at the fragment

and hear a voice of confidence that could be mine

and I tremble.

I show it to people so they will laugh at it

or shrug.

For a moment, when they aren't touched, I'm relieved.

Maybe there's nothing there!

But it never helps for long.

Everyone's always changing and everyone's pretending they don't see each other.

I can't trust them.

I'm just alone and terrified

with this thing I can't let go of.

**Winter white and open-eyed breath taking chill
Over swaddled hills and in between the snapping witch finger branches,
There is a dark dreg mountain tree dominating over rocks,
And soaking shadows in the mist while breaking down the wind.**

**I saw a girl there who sang to wolves, and pulled thorns from their paws
And danced the wind chime chatter call dance under the tree
When dark wolves howled and raked around her pagan fire
And brought cracked bleeding kills for growling pups to savor.**

**Looking up from the river that ran by the rampaging tree
Seeing my disheveled majesty with those eyes, those large dark eyes,
She rose from the black rocks and graced the air,
Took my hand and led me to the snow drifts
In the blazing white of the place
And commanded me**

**"Call down the star-scarred life blood
Crack the cloud shrouded vast above
Demand the rupture and the real life
The living rich of divine blood.**

**Raise your hand and claim the chaos roar
Breathe the air with me, we've got the heart beat battle cry.
I am the living response to doom, my outrage has knighted me**

**The infirm will find sanctuary under the bower of my defiance.
In the world I'll find the rage and tyrant call of the living
And sing the shrieking silence death anthem.'**

**There is something to call forth from the wild and cold and severe and reckless
And the girl
Who tends to wolves and to the rich dark night
Is going to hear my pious passion triumph resonate
And she will not be ashamed that she touched me.**

I hope that you can't hear it

But just telling you

my heart's beating so fast.

What am I going to do?

I hear it!

It's too much, to feel all this.

It has to let me go!

Effluent

Behind the sullied rot of his teeth
A drunk spews out a cancered laugh
His eyes bewitch you
They want you
“Kick over a crate and sit with me
I never abhor a human touch
Or ever turn away a human soul
We’re so different from animals
We have language
and our words make us carnal divinities in rolling flesh
Sit with me and we’ll talk
Sit near me
Let me look at you
And I’ll tell you something terrible
Something to sicken the heart
Because only gods get heartsick.”

As he tells you the story your eyes widen
You want to mourn
But we don’t know how to mourn.

In time
in tempered time.

We are in a brothel, going up the stairs
Passing rooms where concerned women are looking from doorways
To the sounds of crashing anguish
Down the hall
A door is wrenched open
And a mad laughing tyrant
Clutching his chest
Emerges from the room
His tongue falls out of his head
As he grins and reels and moves away.

We see behind him a young woman pulling herself up
Among the *broken things*
Holding her stomach and gasping
She pulls a razor from beneath her pillow
And follows the laughing man.

He calls out from the hallway as he descends the stairs
“Goodbye, my Cherub!
Give God his grace
Die now young and beautiful
We’re only remembered when our life is tragedy
I give you immortality!”

She follows, silent and grim

She's reached the stairs and looks down on him
He's reached the bottom and is breathing hard.
Looking up at her he stops and his face falls
"What a place for us to *see* each other
The light is drab
There's no color here!"
He starts to weep and fold his fingers through his shirt
Moaning and grasping his chest
"I killed cats as a boy
I wasn't a child I'd want to know
I was invisible for years
Maybe I don't do well in someone's sight
I have to be unseen."

She is pained
But is making her way slowly down the stairs
The blood from her stomach staining her hand
With her other talon she holds the razor and leans her arm against the rail.

His face is lost
But then his eyes grow large
His face twists in rage
He looks up at her again.

“What right did you have to mention my wife?

What right do you have to pity her?!

This is not a place for those kinds of words

I don't want to hear her name!”

He turns and sways through the parlor

Ripping down pictures

Shattering a lamp.

Going past some of the girls

He bursts into the kitchen

Sees a pot of boiling water

He takes it up and holds it above him

He waits by the door.

“No! I was lost and I liked it

With memories I've collected all my bruises

I knew I was different when I got used to the dark.

“I have the belly for it! I have the room

For all that tasty hate to come and dwell in me

I've got the proud and weary eyes

I can see anything and unfeel

I am unchanged by horror

Let's do something horrible now!

Gather it up for a grinded matter
Fill up hell in a night
The sky is going to burn
There's not enough throats to scream our mourning song."

The women have started to gather around the parlor
Trying to lend her a hand
But she doesn't want it.
Her eyes dart
Hearing his voice she steps to the lamp
Lifting it and throwing it
He screams
A pot clangs and crashes
He screams still
They hear him running to the pantry.

He roars as he goes
"I envy the demons that defied god in the open
I can only hurt him from the shadows
I can't find anything to cry over
I'm growing old and bent so quickly."

She follows but she is so tired
Her pain sends rippling icy tremors through her body
Her poor body.

He leans against the wall of the pantry
Welts boil over his twisted face
Sick and bitter he's about to call out to her again
But turns to hear whimpering in the pantry.
Some poor girl hiding behind the shelf
She'd just come up from the basement with dark bottles in her arms
But can't get out with this thing in the doorway.
She calls out the woman's name.

The woman hears it
She hears her name
She comes quickly.

He hears her name spoken aloud.

He stops.

He's caught in something dark in his mind
"I've trampled something holy today"
Struck and lost he goes towards the girl.

The woman cries out No!
He turns to her in fear
In fear of something holy
Backs away from the woman

towards the girl
And toward the open hatch
Loses his footing and falls
Screaming into the basement
Cracking and snapping as he crashes on the cold floor
Looking up at the only light
Flooding in from the hatch.

The girl comes away, around the hatch towards the woman
“I can’t hold you now
You’ll have nightmares of your own
You don’t need mine
You don’t need to see any more”
Other arms come for the girl
‘Other arms can carry her away’, she thinks
‘I can’t carry anything now.’

She falls before the hatch
And coils as she hugs herself.

She hears him climb the ladder
And then fall again
Twisting in pain she rolls to her back
And starts to kick at the pipes

Kicking the rusted joints
Kicking and shrieking
Like she's tearing something in her self.

The joints break to the side
Water rushes into the room
Catching the women in its cold
Embracing her suddenly.

And then finding the hatch
And flooding the basement

He watches the water
And knows what it means
He feels it happening.

She hears him sputtering
But she doesn't want any more of his words.

"After you died," she calls down
"I gave flowers to your widow
I apologized you couldn't be buried
Couldn't have your place marked.

But *I spoke her name*
I touched her cheek

She laughed through her tears
To hear her name”

He twists in his agony to look through the falling water at the light
Reaching
Trying to hear

“It took time
But I healed
I wasn’t your vengeance on anything
I wasn’t your sacrificial lamb.”

The drunk looks at you in wonder
At first he smiles
But at your horror he comes closer
Grabbing your arms
And pleading

“Don’t you understand?
There was a moment where he SAW!
A moment given to this monster
To be aware.
He was pierced

Touched

He could see”

Trembling the drunk looks out at nothing

“Something can intrude on my torment

Something can disturb the monotony

My decline

Shake my indifference!

I can be affected

It’s possible that someday

I could see.”

Judgement

“She’s awake. I can walk you down there now if you’d like. I...Just want you to know though... that we’ve... there were tests to be done you see... and when she started to talk there was just something off...when we performed a perfectly normal check on the swelling on her brain, her nuerotransmits...look I know this is difficult, please understand that everyone here is supportive of you, she can stay as long as you need, the whole staff, the entire facility is completely at your disposal...She has no memory. She won’t remember you. Not at first. I’m confident that in time we can make some real headway, if you want ...if you want to wait...By law, you are allowed to proceed whenever you wish. It’s all up to you. Rachel...I’m behind you, whatever you want to do.”

Dr. Rachel Crai stood for some time, looking out at the fields beyond the hospital grounds. She could see there was no wind, nothing was bearing on the tall grass or any of the branches in the vineyards.

Slowly she looked down as she brought her right hand over her left, the slightest touch...anyway.

“I’ll go down there alone, Dr. Bryce. Please tell the committee I request a delay for judgment. Thank you very much.”

Kelsa looked over at the door as soon as Rachel entered, and Rachel saw no recognition in her eyes. Kelsa did observe the way the attendants became quiet when Rachel entered, and how none of them would look at her. She sat up in her bed. “You’re the victim?”

“I *was* the victim. Then I testified against you and gave proof of your guilt. By law I am now the Arbitrator, I no longer carry the burden of being a victim, now I decide when and how you are to be punished.”

Kelsa scratched the back of her hand. “I don’t remember you.”

“Yes, I’ve been told.”

“I don’t remember what I did.”

Rachel did not answer.

“They tell me I’m guilty of something terrible, and that I have to remain here, they say that I was injured in a conflict with law enforcement. But no one will tell me what I did.”

“I’m not going to tell you either.”

Kelsa looked down to her hands, her eyes tearing. Rachel came to the foot of the bed, and lay a hand on Kelsa’s ankle, than looked at her and said, “You are Dr. Kelsa Bradden, you have worked at this facility for 3 years. You have a brilliant background, no family besides a sister you haven’t spoken to since you left medical school, and a villa that overlooks the ocean. Aside from the loss of your memory your wounds have healed, you are in incredibly good health.”

“...Why haven’t I been speaking to my sister?”

“I am going to stay with you, we are going to talk about of your life, we’re going to talk about the time we’ve spent together, we’re going to do many of the things we did here before your crime. We’re confident that we can bring you back to yourself and restore your memory. This is an excellent facility, and the staff are dedicated. And we have time.”

“For me to remember, and become the person I was, so you can punish the person who hurt you?”

“Yes” Rachel smiled coldly, “You were always very quick. This is a good start.”

They would walk the fields and through the vineyards, Kelsa laughing like a child to be in the sun and away from the restraint bed.

Rachel had fitted a monitor band in her hair that fit snugly on her head around the *planum temporale*. She was careful, brushing Kelsa’s rich hair, and fitting the device gently. It was not uncomfortable.

At first Kelsa was eager to hear about herself, but when the topic would come to her medical career she faded away and was easily distracted.

Rachel brought her to the river where Kelsa had spent so much time before, and was encouraged to see Kelsa take to it immediately with the same quiet manner she had had whenever she had visited.

When they spoke of personal matters Kelsa was attentive to Rachel’s every word. She asked questions, pausing after Rachel answered, looking almost like she was placing the information carefully within her.

At the end of the first day Rachel brought her hand through Kelsa’s hair until she found the device, gently tapping the small controls while some information flashed in front of Rachel’s eyes as it was transmitted to her ocular interpreter. “Is this painful at all?”

Kelsa cocked her head, and mumbled quietly, “no.” Then she looked up at Rachel and said “Can you tell me the usual sentence for my crime?”

Rachel said firmly “Your crime was not...no one has ever don’t that before. But the mandatory punishment for violence of any kind against law enforcement is death by Tranquil Sleep. As someone who was a citizen victim, and now Arbitrator, the State allows my judgment to supersede any other.”

Kelsa looked away, “What are you going to choose?”

Rachel shook her head, and looked deeply at Kelsa for some time. “I don’t know”

For days they would go through the libraries, Rachel always curious about what Kelsa would end up reading. It was always something different. She was displaying much more open mindedness for literature and biography than she had ever shown as long as Rachel knew her. One afternoon Rachel found Kelsa giggling to herself while sitting amidst a pile of books, reading some sports personalities memoir. After Kelsa laughed out loud, Rachel smile and asked her, “What have you found so funny?” Kelsa looked up, her eyes show, “It’s hard to explain-” and then she laughed even louder as she tried to say, “I don’t think it’s supposed to be funny!” When they were walking back Kelsa smiled to herself, “It’s his kids I feel sorry for, having a Neanderthal like that for a father.”

Rachel wondered if it was time to mention children. That could bring some things back.

After a morning of reviewing photos and movie footage of Kelsa’s life, which didn’t initiate the slightest recognition in Kelsa, they were walking through the courtyard when the hospital alarms pealed. They ran to where the lights directed, Carri Savers room, where Carri was pleading for medicine and trying to rise from the bed, only to be shocked by new agony and fall down. Carri had poison in him, stemming from the brain, and though they could operate he could not be anesthetized or the brain would cripple Carri from the inside. Rachel held his head and tried to soothe him.

Kelsa immediately took the surgical instruments from Dr. Renes and begin to work, isolating the streams of toxin, her hands working quickly, her eyes darting as she deftly identified the infections and points of pressure. The surgical assistants and the doctors continued to support, but could not help but look at her in astonishment. Dr. Renes, very worried, stood at the side of the room and pulled down an administrative monitor to check...but, no... no substantial awareness in Kelsa. She was working on auto-pilot, did not remember, could not tell what she was doing. He came back to the bed to assist and then saw in Kelsa’s face some of her own

astonishment, as she fixed one of the implements in place and stood waiting for its fissure. She slowly looked up at Rachel at the head of the bed. The assistants followed her gaze.

Carri was no longer jolting in pain, though his hands were gripping the sheets as if he could to tear through them. Rachel was speaking softly to him. He looked into Rachel's eyes, as she looked into his, and her low powerful voice was soothing him. At one moment it sounded as if she were describing what was happening in the procedure, how he was being healed, the next describing what was happening in his body, and then in the next describing, with scientific surety and detail, the future he would have without pain. He was allowing the surgery to take place and staying with Rachel, as she led him in mind to recovery.

“You'll walk, you'll have full capacity for movement, just like before. You will read and listen to music without pain. You will talk as much as you wish, as loud as you wish. You'll go back to hiking and take on the cliffs you haven't been to, you'll explore caves others won't go to. You'll meet someone else interested in these things, someone who wants to spend time with you, someone you think about constantly. After some time of socially constructed awkward ritual, you will take them with you wherever you go, you will not be alone. There won't be nights where you have to summon courage to call out for help, there will be no pain, no reason to cry, and the one you've chosen will always be near. You are young, you'll accomplish, you'll matter to people, your thoughts will be important. Because you wish it, because you have strength, you will bring it about. You have a future Carri, and you will honor that.”

Only after the procedure was done and Carri was asleep did Rachel look up to see Kelsa staring at her.

When Rachel walked Kelsa to her room, Kelsa shook her hand and held it for a moment, in real regard, while Rachel said, “You did very well, thank you for helping him.” Kelsa tried to answer something, “It's hard for me...for me to think that ...I...that I..” But Rachel closed her eyes, and Kelsa stopped. They slowly turned from each other.

Dr. Renes was waiting outside Rachel's room.

“Why don't we tell the counsel we need more time, we have a probation of sorts. Please, Rachel, take your time.”

Dr. Rachel Crai looked at him, sensing the kindness and the concern. She nodded.

That night as she undressed, Rachel stopped before the mirror, and touched the scar from her incision. Then, weeping, she knelt on the floor, and leaned against the bed. It was some time before she could get into the bed and fall asleep.

The Amygdala and Hippocampus are the parts of the brain that control memory and emotion, and in waking life they are nearly dormant. This makes our lives possible, so that we can process the new information and function with other people. But when we sleep they are wide open, and our dreams become so intense that the body produces a chemical paralytic so that we will not jostle ourselves awake or do our selves harm. Sometimes a person's conscious mind is woken before the paralytic has diffused, and they experience the paralysis for a few seconds.

Rachel woke up and could not move.

She couldn't remember what she had been dreaming, but she felt exhausted from sadness. It was terrible not to be able to move. She struggled and strained and then closed her eyes, and saw herself sleeping. She could see stars above and rock below. She floated above herself, seeing her eyes tremble in REM.

Rachel felt sudden terror and looked to see Dr. Renes was pounding at her door.

"The administrative Monitor shows complete recognition and awareness. I've tried to keep it quiet, but there were some attendants who saw the notification before I did."

Rachel could see herself getting out of bed, put on her coat and walked briskly toward Kelsa's room. There was a buzz in the facility, and, well intentioned people were coming out to see her. She returned none of their looks. The curiosity on their faces, the gaze, were nothing but an intrusion now. What she would do was none of their business.

Rachel watched her self walk down the corridor, and shook her head and put her hand to her mouth.

None of them, no one there was at all thinking of Kelsa, how she might react to her sudden memory. All they could see was Rachel, and they wondered what she was going to do.

She heard Renes was calling her name and coming after her.

Rachel saw her self stop outside the door. She knew what she would find and tried to look away, furious that the Rachel she was watching had no idea.

And so she opened to the door, and saw that Kelsa had hanged herself.

She walked in.

She closed the door.

She cut her down.

Enough.

When the paralysis released her Rachel fled into the quiet of the facility towards Kelsa's room. There were no lights, but she found it easily.

Rachel forced open the door and heard the monitor go off just as she entered. Kelsa screamed and held her eyes as she arched her back and fell to the side. Rachel ran to her and held her tight, pinning Kelsa's shoulder to the bedside table as Kelsa cried out and kicked and tried to tear at her own throat.

Without thinking, Rachel offered thanks that Kelsa was alive.

The stewards in the monitoring room had woken up the doctors and they had all tried to find Dr. Rachel Crai, but after not being able to locate her anywhere in the facility they came to Kelsa's room. They could only stand at in the doorway and watch as Dr. Crai held Kelsa close to her and spoke in a low soothing voice as Kelsa sobbed and shook.

To Dance, I Flee

The wise old man woke in a terror

Sweating

His eyes dancing around

Until the grey day vision gave way to color

He breathed steady, and blinked.

People saw him rip out of his cottage in a tangle of robes

then dive into the forest like a collapsing deer.

Pushing back branches and tearing through vines

The wise old man would stop suddenly and listen

Then run in a different direction then stop to listen.

again

again

his breathing a burden

blind effort

again

again

becoming so tired

his body bent

then in his agitation he fell

only after some time could he look up

mud encrusted on his face and twigs in his beard.

He heard

He heard

With renewed power he rose

Raked away the branches hanging and hooking

Until he came to the clearing.

By the brook.

Young women were dancing there

and circling

and laughing

Leaping sighing and pulling the hair from their beaming faces

They circled and sang and fell down into long grass

One of the young women came up from the river

And smiling, began to dance for the rest

She was more nimble, more graceful

And danced with real pleasure

As one does when they accept talent

without shame or hesitancy

And embrace the outpouring of love.

The wise old man watched them

Watched her

Watched her move and pull and sway the time around her

How she affected the eyes!

He wished he could capture them, and have them come only in his dreams

The terror rose in him again

It's so hard to see something exquisite that you can't possess.

Criminal feeling

Prison

Prison is what he'd want

A Dark cell where she'd be kept

And dance only for him

Be seen and not seen

Be and not be

He broke into the clearing

Barking and shrieking like a damned thing

The young women backed away

The maidens, the dancers

The ungraspable life

Repelled by him.

At first his words could not be discerned as human language

But then the dancer heard his real voice

“To dance and laugh like this

What do you do to those who see you?

Betrayer!

Who gave you permission to be this way?

By what right do you dance?

Where is your conscience?

How full of pride!

Aren't you ashamed of what you make me feel?"

The dancer stepped forward

She did what comes naturally to an innocent when they see a fool being a fool

She laughed.

He ran after her

The dancer was amused by his movements.

She moved gracefully

Gliding through the trees and passing over stones with the faintest touch.

He follows after with demonic energy

Snaking through the foliage

She went to the town

Stopped by the well

to drink.

She wanted to reveal his ravings

Knowing his kind

He'll wither under inspection.

The villagers came out to hear his rabid pronouncements
As he follows into the square
Holding his chest

The flesh is weak
But the spirit is wanting

He breathed just enough to rasp
The wise old man was desperate
How to rid himself of this fever?
What to say to incite his fellows
To grasp, restrain
Would there then be relief?

When she heard his repeated indictment
She laughed
What need is there to respond?
To respond to condemnation is to give it legitimacy.
She drank from the well.

But she suddenly saw strange ripples in the water

What are these sounds?
Are they whispers?

What words need to be said in these shamed timbres?

She listens

He's a wise man, he's not a lunatic...

Why doesn't she say anything...

It looks bad, but if he says so...

He's the one that would know.

Her smile fades as she drinks.

Things changed

She saw changes when

She saw men smiling

But their eyes didn't move

She notices her own heartbeat

The sounds around her bend

All of the noises and tones now murmur

Rumble

Of her danger.

She turns

With relief, back to the trees, back to strength and the clean brutal wild

The dancer flees

From the man

From the men

From the din of their complicity.

The villagers command her to stop and turn back
The dancer flees
And in denying them she sets them free
From their labor
Free from axes
From shovels
From plows
Their hammers now instruments of justice
Broken from the dreariness of the village
Freed from bleakness and the horror of age inevitable
She shatters the norm and the calm
And their limbs are set free
to pursue
They follow their savior into the forest
To find her and silence her because she refused to speak.

Running
The dancer leaps
Breathing
Beating
She spreads rays of sense around her
Acute
Aware
Hearing the shouts

Looking

Searching

Paths?

Trail?

A way without hooks or brambles
or a place to hide?

And in her wake she leaves her defenses

Tree-pillars

Vine-walls

Muck-moats

Walls of javelin branches and the thick care of dark canopy cover.

Thorns and thistles

To torment man.

The villagers can't find their way

The wise old man is frantic

Villagers breathing hard

Holding their sides

Swinging at branches

Squinting through sweat

Bellowing

And only ever hearing their own twisted voices in response.

The wise old man searches

The fortress forest denying his movements

His every attempt to **breach**.

He wonders what it would take to burn it down.

Then, stumbling,

the wise old man turns back to wrench the faulty root

He sees something shaking the bushes

He stands still

The bush tremors

He charges forward and with his vicious eyes he sees

Red fur

A hissing fox.

With frustrated venom burning through him

He lifts a branch

And brings it down

Feels crushing bone

Feels with satisfaction something giving way under his power

Exultant in affecting

In moving something with his violence.

The fox hisses

One of her paws still works, and she digs at the dirt to pull away

But keeps her eyes on his.

He is suddenly afraid
And leaves assuring himself he's lost interest
Joining the bellowing mob
As they work their way into the deeps of the forest.

From the shrouds and shadows
The dancer walks from her hiding place
In horror
Amid the harsh of violent noise
She walks in the open to the vixen
And kneels beside her
The fox is mortally wounded and losing herself
The dancer's eyes are swollen
For cruelty shocks the eyes and punishes them for being loyal to the soul
She watches in terrified confusion
The vixen's tortured breaths
Straining to hear past the shrieking
To the vixen's heartbeat.

The wind blows on the dancers tears and cools her face.

Shaking herself awake to life
Tearing at her clothes to wrap fabric in her hands .

She draws in breathe.

And strikes

Pinning the body and pulling the beautiful head around

God be thanked that the snap and death come quickly

The eyes close

Shaking the dancer rises

Holding something to be returned to the earth

Oblivious to shouts and calls

She rises and sees the men

With her scorched eyes

And thinks

“What words did you want from me?

I am embodied riot!

Trembling flame

Quivering engulfing fire

And terrifying ambition in my hunger and my thirst.

What part of you could hear that?

Better to turn away as I tear through time

Than try to respond to a Storm of God!

When you speak your eyes get bleary

And your face looks like an open wound.”

She stumbles and weeps into the wild

Carrying her chosen burden
Away from the noise
And the hell the noise brings.

Finding a place and starting to dig.

After the burial
Exhausted she falls into the crack of a willow
That has opened to receive her and enclose her in warmth
And finally she can rest her head.

And she's dancing
She glides
She leaps
She shears away from the earth
Into the ether
She laughs out loud
Flush with the greater feeling
And so the greater reality
of dreams.

It's not quite that she dances without tiring
But her fatigue is gentle while it is present
Reassuring her she is doing something essential
Without keeping her from doing it as she likes

It's like the memory of an ache.

And she dances.

There's a Song in her dream

She shudders with its touch.

“There was a response in me

But I forgot the words

I was distracted by their other words

It wasn't

“Don't hurt me.

It wasn't

“Come save me.”

It was

”Get thee behind me.”

I'm awash in feeling

A quivering blaze

I'm not possessed when desired

I don't dance as a trophy

I'm the rapture and the eruption

of defiant spirit

And in the midst of her dream she hears a call for help

An old tired man

Alone in the cold and dark

Lost and afraid

Troubled by his loss of voice and sight

He can't find the moon

Can find another to hold to

He's lost himself

She feels pity.

And it's not fear or malice that keeps her in sleep

Returns her mind to song

But the flow of Ether

The rush of the ultra-reality of dream

And the terrible exhaustion from her flight.