

SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

AUTUMN POETICS



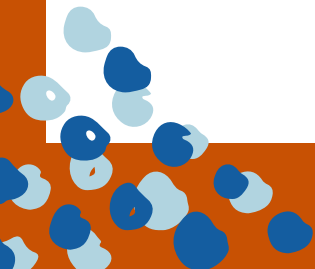
ENGLISH 210
FALL SEMESTER 2021

AUTUMN ALLY DESPATHY

**ANOTHER SUMMER GONE.
WE HOLD OUR HATS AS THE
WIND AND DAYS BLOW PAST.**

**AUTUMN FLARES OUT
IN WARM TONES, LIVELY
AND—LIKE US—LONGING TO
STAY.**

**ALL THAT'S LEFT IS A SPICED
RESIDUE:
CRUMBLLED, DECAYING LEAVES
AND RICH GOLDEN LANDSCAPES.**

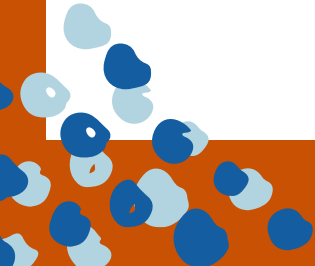







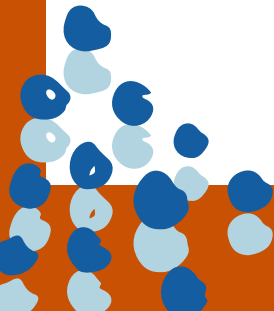
HONEYCRISP KYLEIGH BURNS

BEING WITH YOU FEELS A BIT LIKE TAKING A BITE OF THE APPLE, ONLY TO FIND THE TASTE NOTHING LIKE WHAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN, NOURISHING, IT WAS SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME WHOLE AGAIN. I FOUND IT OUTSIDE IN THE SUMMER IN A PLACE THAT I LOVE. IT WAS NESTLED AMONGST FRIENDS AND SAT SO PRETTILY ON THE BRANCH, I THOUGHT THE ONLY PLACE IT WOULD LOOK BETTER WAS MY HANDS. IT FOUGHT AGAINST ME SOME, WHEN I TRIED TO PULL IT FROM THE BRANCH. I CONSIDERED GETTING MY KNIFE OUT TO CUT IT, BUT WITH A QUICK TWIST AND SOME REASSURING WORDS IT FINALLY GAVE IN. I RUBBED IT AGAINST THE COTTON OF MY SHIRT, TRYING TO GET OFF THE DIRT OF ITS PAST. WHEN THE APPLE AT LAST SEEMED CLEAN I BROUGHT IT TO MY MOUTH, EXPECTING A CRUNCH AND A HUG AND A PARTNERSHIP FOR LIFE.





BUT INSTEAD IT CRUMBLES AS SOON AS MY
TEETH SINK IN, CRUMBLES INTO A MEALY
SACCHARINE MUSH. IT MOVES AROUND MY
MOUTH, CRAWLING IT'S WAY INTO EVERY
CREVICE AND CORNER. IT WON'T STOP
TOUCHING ME, IT'S ALWAYS TOUCHING ME.
QUICK, BEFORE IT BEGINS TO SLITHER DOWN
MY THROAT, I SPIT IT OUT. I REACH AROUND
FOR THE CLOSEST DRINK TO RINSE OUT MY
MOUTH, WHETHER IT'S THE WATER ON OUR
BEDSIDE TABLE OR THE SHOTS OF BOURBON
YOU WOULD POUR FOR US WHEN I VISITED
YOU AT THE BAR. WHEN MY HAND AT LAST
BRINGS A GLASS TO MY LIPS, THE TASTE OF
STALE WATER SLIPS THROUGH THEM. I FIND I
WISH IT WAS THE FIERY BURN OF WHISKEY
INSTEAD AS I SWISH IT AROUND, IN BETWEEN
MY TEETH, CLEARING YOU OUT OF MY BODY.









GIRLS LIKE ME IN PLACES LIKE THIS

RUBY SCHROEDER

“HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO FALL IN LOVE?” THIS COMES OUT A HALF-WHISPER, AUDIBLE ONLY TO MY OWN EARS AND HERS. “SIXTEEN DAYS,” TWO LIPS ANSWER WITH CONVICTION, THEN CURVE INTO A SMILE, AND WHEN MY GAZE FLITS UP TO HER EYES, I CAN SEE A REFLECTION OF MY OWN DRUNKEN CONTENTMENT. IT TAKES A MINUTE FOR THE WORDS TO TRAVEL UP THE CANALS OF MY EARS AND INTO THE FOGGY SWAMP THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE MY BRAIN. IN THE MEANTIME, I SWIM IN HER GREEN EYES. I BACKSTROKE AND BUTTERFLY LAPS IN THOSE DEPTHS, AND THAT MINUTE COULD HAVE BEEN HOURS. SHE HAS SUCH BEAUTIFUL EYES. I FINALLY BREAK THE SURFACE. “SIXTEEN?” I LAUGH. “WHAT ABOUT LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT? I’VE TOLD PEOPLE I’VE LOVED THEM IN FAR LESS THAN SIXTEEN DAYS.”

THE EYES AND LIPS BECOME A HEAD AND SHOULDERS WHICH ONLY SHRUG IN RESPONSE, STILL SMILING.

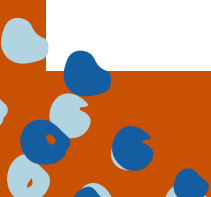





I LEAN BACK, MY OWN SHOULDERS MEETING THE COOL METAL OF A CHAIR BACKING. ANOTHER COOL TOUCH TO MY KNEE IS A HAND— NOT MY OWN, I SEARCH AND FIND MINE RESTING IN MY LAP— CURLING LONG FINGERS AGAINST THE FABRIC OF MY JEANS. DRUNKENLY, I WONDER WHY I'D PUT ON JEANS TODAY. "WHAT, ARE YOU SAYING THAT WASN'T LOVE? ANYTHING BEFORE SIXTEEN DAYS IS... STRONG LIKE? LUST?" I CUT BACK IN, A PART (MOST) OF MY MIND STILL STUCK ON THE FINGERS DRAWING SENSUAL CIRCLES ON MY KNEE.


"WELL..." THE CIRCLES ON MY KNEE STOP. I SUDDENLY WISH I HADN'T ASKED. WHAT HAD I ASKED? I'VE FORGOTTEN.

"'LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT' IS NOTHING MORE THAN A CHEAP MARKETING STRATEGY. IT'S A LINE FOR HALLMARK'S CHRISTMAS MOVIES AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO SELL THEIR VALENTINE'S CARDS. THE TRUE LOVE SALESMAN'S BEST TOOL IN HIS TOOLBOX. I'M SURE MANY PEOPLE WHO CLAIM THIS DO EVENTUALLY FALL IN LOVE, AND I'M NOT SAYING I CONDEMN THEM TO SOLITUDE, I JUST..." HERE, SHE TRAILS OFF, THINKING. I FEEL MYSELF BEGIN TO SINK AGAIN IN THE SILENCE, WITHOUT THE DISTRACTION OF HER WORDS FROM THE DISTRACTION OF HER MOUTH. MY EYES SLIDE DOWN HER CHIN AND HER NECK, DRINKING IN THE CURVES OF HER SKIN.





“I JUST KNOW,” SHE FINISHES FIRMLY, ONCE AGAIN DRAGGING ME BACK TO THE SURFACE. I NOD. SHE LOOKS SO MUCH MORE SOBER THAN I FEEL, AND I MARVEL AT HOW WELL SHE CAN HOLD HER TEQUILA. OR WAS THAT SOMEONE ELSE? ACTUALLY, WHERE WAS HER DRINK NOW? I STARE AT HER OTHER HAND (THE ONE NOT RESTING ON MY LEG), WILLING IT TO COME INTO FOCUS, WAITING FOR AN IMAGE OF A CUP TO COME INTO VIEW. BEFORE I CAN MAKE ANYTHING OUT, THE HAND ON MY KNEE BECOMES A HAND ON MY CHIN, GUIDING ME BACK TO HER SERENE FACE. SHE SMILES AT ME, AND I SMILE BACK. WAS MY HEART BEATING FASTER, OR DID THE WORLD OUTSIDE JUST SLOW DOWN? WHAT WAS SHE DOING? WHERE WERE MY NERVES? A STRAND OF PERFECTLY CURLED HAIR SLIPS IN FRONT OF HER FACE, AND I REACH UP TO PUSH IT BEHIND HER EAR. FUZZY FROM THE HAZE OF ALCOHOL, MY HAND IN THE AIR IN FRONT OF ME DOGS FORWARD AND BACK, CLUMSILY CLUTCHING AT THE AIR. THAT ONLY CONFUSES ME FURTHER, BUT AS I LOWER MY ARM, I AM REMINDED OF WHERE I AM. SHE’S STILL SMILING AT ME, UNFAZED BY MY AWKWARD SHOW. FUNNILY ENOUGH, I’M NOT, EITHER. DEFINITELY HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK, THEN. SHE PULLS ME FORWARD, GENTLY BUT WITH PURPOSE, AND JUST BEFORE MY LIPS TOUCH HERS, AS I AM CLOSING MY EYES IN BLISSFUL ANTICIPATION, BELLY WARM WITH TEQUILA AND EROTIC DESIRE,






I NEARLY OPEN MY EYES AGAIN IN SURPRISE, BUT THEN I HEAR A WHISPER IN MY EAR.


“I DOUBT YOU’LL REMEMBER ME IN THE MORNING, BUT I HOPE YOU REMEMBER THESE WORDS.”

I SHIVER, MY BRAIN STILL FOGGY WITH THE DESIRE TO KISS HER BEAUTIFUL MOUTH, AND THEN TO DO MUCH, MUCH MORE TO THAT BEAUTIFUL MOUTH. STILL, I SOMEHOW UNDERSTAND THE STILLNESS THIS SCENE NOW ASKS OF ME. HER FINGERS ARE ICE ON MY CHIN.

“THIS WILL NOT BE YOUR STORY. YOU’RE SMART. YOU KNOW WHY. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO GIRLS LIKE US. YOU DRINK AND YOU DANCE AND YOU MEET A NICE GIRL AND YOU THINK YOURSELF HAPPY, BUT YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN YOURSELF. RIGHT NOW, YOUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD IS FIXED. IT IS STILL, AND IF YOU KEEP MEETING GIRLS LIKE ME IN PLACES LIKE THIS, YOU WILL NEVER SEE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE THAT MATTERS.”

AT THIS, I BALK, BUT IT’S HARD TO TELL IF IT’S BECAUSE OF HER WORDS OR THE TEQUILA SLOWLY CREEPING ITS WAY BACK UP MY THROAT. SHE PRESSES ON, BREATH HOT AGAINST MY NECK. “LISTEN TO ME. I WANT YOU TO HAVE YOUR SIXTEEN DAY LOVE STORY, AND I WANT YOU TO BUY THE SHITTY HALLMARK VALENTINE’S CARDS AND WATCH THE CHRISTMAS MOVIES. RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I WANT YOU TO HAVE BIGGER PRIORITIES.”





I CAN TELL YOU CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER MY NAME, AND WE'VE BEEN TALKING ALL NIGHT. YOUR PLAN FOR THIS EVENING BEGAN AND ENDED WITH ME, A STRANGER YOU WON'T EVER THINK OF AGAIN. I WANT MY NAME IN LIGHTS. I WANT TO READ MY NAME ON BILLBOARDS AND CALL ALL MY TEACHERS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND FLIP THEM OFF FOR DOUBTING ME. I INTEND TO FIGHT MY WAY INTO HISTORY BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY WAY GIRLS LIKE US CAN. AS CHILDREN WE WERE TAUGHT TO LOOK FOR LOVE, AND THAT'S FINE, BUT TONIGHT I'M TELLING YOU TO LOOK FOR YOUR NAME. PUT YOUR NAME IN THE SO-CALLED 'HISTORY BOOKS.' THEN, AT BETTER PARTIES THAN THIS, FIND THAT LOVE STORY."

IT TAKES ME ANOTHER MINUTE TO REALIZE SHE'S STOPPED TALKING, AND WHEN I OPEN MY EYES, SHE'S GONE. I KEEL FORWARD, FACE PLANTING INTO THE CUSHION OF A COUCH.







WE HAPPY FEW JACEY KRUEGER

**JOIN ME AT THE KITCHEN SINK, YOUR ARMS
AROUND MY WAIST.**

**WHISPER JOKES INTO MY EAR, MOVE IN CLOSER,
LEAVE NO SPACE.**

**I'LL FILL THE SINK WITH SOAPY WATER, WIPE THE
LIPSTICK FROM YOUR GLASS.**

**I WORSHIP THE KISS YOU LEAVE BEHIND. OUR OWN
KIND OF MIDNIGHT MASS.**

**LET ME KNEEL AT YOUR ALTAR. LET ME FIGHT
AMONGST YOUR RANKS.**

**WHEN I'M HERE WITH YOU I REMEMBER WHY AT
MEALS WE GIVE THANKS.**

**SIT WITH ME IN THE KITCHEN, YOUR INSIDES
WARM FROM HOMEMADE STEW.**

**WE HAVE FOUND SOMETHING WORTH FIGHTING
FOR. A HAPPY BAND OF TWO.**





CLOSE TO YOU

MELODY TUAN


MY FATHER ALWAYS LIKED THE RAIN. WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I ASKED WHY.

“IT MUST BE BECAUSE OF THE 海 IN MY NAME. IT MEANS OCEAN. I AM ONE WITH THE WATER.”

I WAS TOLD WHEN I WAS BORN, I DIDN'T SHED A SINGLE TEAR. DOCTORS FEARED I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO BREATHE, THEIR LATEX COVERED HANDS RUSHING TO RESUSCITATE ME. THEIR WORRIES WERE WASTED AS MY INFANTILE CHEST ROSE. MY FATHER SCOOPED ME FROM MY MOTHER'S ARMS, PRESSING HIS CHEEK AGAINST MINE. DROPLETS DRIPPED ONTO MY HEAD, STREAMING FROM HIS EYES. MY FIRST TASTE OF RAIN.

THE DAY HE DIED, I CRIED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

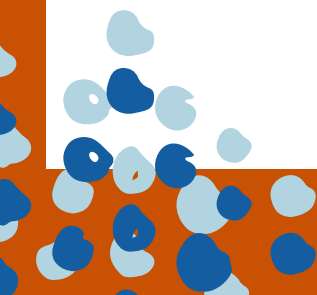
THE UNCONTROLLABLE FLOW UNEARTHED MEMORIES OF MY FIRST TIME MENSTRUATING. MY FATHER AVOIDED EYE CONTACT WITH ME AS THE DARK STAIN IN MY PANTS GREW LARGER, SOAKING THROUGH THE TOILET PAPER I ROLLED INTO MY UNDERWEAR.



ON THE DAY OF HIS FUNERAL, IT RAINED. I THINK HE WOULD'VE BEEN HAPPY. I IMAGINED HIM TAKING A DRAG FROM HIS CIGARETTE, SMOKE DANCING AROUND THE RAINDROPS, DISSIPATING ALONG WITH HIS SILHOUETTE.

THE FOLLOWING WEEKS, IT CONTINUED TO RAIN AS I CONTINUED TO CRY. I CLOSELY TRAILED THE RAIN DROPS ON THE WINDOW, THE SMALLER ONES MERGING INTO BIGGER ONES. I REMEMBERED OUR ROAD TRIPS FROM MY CHILDHOOD. THE ONLY WAY TO AMUSE MYSELF WAS WATCHING DROPLETS RACE AS WE SPED DOWN THE HIGHWAY, MY DAD'S OLD ALBUMS ON REPEAT. A SWEET VOICE FLOODED THE CAR, SOFT PIANO MELODIES MELTING INTO US.

**WHY DO BIRDS SUDDENLY APPEAR EVERY TIME YOU ARE NEAR?
JUST LIKE ME, THEY LONG TO BE CLOSE TO YOU**





**I SILENTLY HUMMED THE TUNE WHILE STIFLING
BACK TEARS. IT STARTED TO STORM AS I WAILED.**

**I DIDN'T WANT TO STOP CRYING. IF I STOPPED
CRYING, THE RAIN WOULD GO AWAY, MY FATHER
WOULD FOLLOW SUIT. I DIDN'T WANT TO LET GO.
AS MY MIND NUMBED FROM SORROW, I TURNED
TO THE OTHER KIND OF PAIN. I PINCHED MYSELF
UNTIL MY SKIN TURNED WHITE THEN PURPLE,
RELYING ON MY BODY'S NATURAL INSTINCTS. I
APPLIED MORE FORCE TO DRAG OUT THE TEARS.
MY EYES LINGERED ON THE WINDOWS, WILLING
EVEN A LIGHT SHOWER.**

爸爸，ARE YOU THERE?








HELEN'S BODY

ABIGAIL ST. PETER

PINNING ME DOWN
WITH CORDED MUSCLES,
VIENS PUMP HOT.
BLOOD THAT FERTILIZED
BATTLEFIELDS AND FOREIGN
COUNTRIES RESIDE INSIDE HIS BODY.
NIGHTWALKERS AND KINGSLAYERS;
CENTURIES OF MEN
LEADING HIM TO ME.

WHEN I DRAG
NAILS ON THE SOFT
FLESH OF HIS INNER ARM
OR ALONG THE DIP
BETWEEN RIBCAGE AND HIP
HE BREAKS OUT IN GOOSEFLESH.
A BODY THAT HAS BLED
AND DONE THE BREAKING
SUBMITS TO MY TOUCH.
EYES FLUTTER CLOSED
“MORE,” THE MAN BEGS.

ON HIS KNEES BEFORE ME
I AM HIS CONQUEROR,
DETERMINING THE BORDER
AND SMILING ON HIS DOLLAR.
A WOMAN IS HIS NATION
AND THE ONLY GOVERNING BODY.







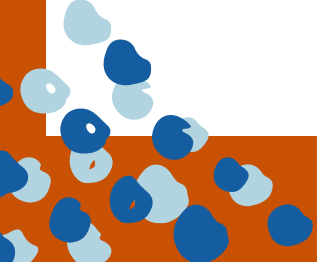
BOOKS FOR SALE


ALICJA FITZPATRICK

**BOOKS FOR SALE, USED.
PURPLE STICKERS SELL FOR FIVE DOLLARS,
GREEN STICKERS FOR THREE,
YELLOW MEANS THEY'RE FREE.**

**ANOTHER DAY PASSES,
MAYBE ANOTHER MONTH.
MY WELL-CRAFTED TEMPERAMENT AND
CAREFULLY MANICURED POISE
RETREAT BACK IN VANITY OF REINVENTION AND
REVELATION.**

**ANOTHER MORNING OF TRADITION AND SACRED
PRACTICE
MELTING INTO BACK-BREAKING LISTS OF
NOTHINGNESS
UNTIL EACH OF MY PAGES,
PRIVATE OR UNSUSPECTINGLY OPTIMISTIC,
ARE LITTERED WITH THE FINGERPRINTS OF
EXPLOITATION.
THEIR OILS MIXING INTO MY INK
AS THEY SHAMELESSLY DISSECT MY SENTENCES,
AND TWIST THEM INTO WORDS OF THEIR OWN.**






WHERE IS THE PLAGIARISM ENFORCEMENT
THEY WARNED US ABOUT IN HIGH SCHOOL.
WHY DID THEY LIE WHEN THEY SAID THEY WERE
ON OUR TEAM,
WHEN THEY SAID THEY'D PROTECT US
FROM THIEVES WHO "WE FOOLISHLY WELCOME"
WITH OPEN ARMS
UNTIL THEY EXTRACT EACH WONDROUS WORD
WHISPERED IN THEIR EARS
AND PRINT THEM OUT FOR THEIR NEXT
ENGAGEMENT,
BURNING THEIR NAMES AT THE END OF OUR
QUOTES.

I TRY AND TRY TO BECOME MORE THAN WHAT I
WAS BEFORE.
TIME MACHINES AND GOLDEN ELIXIRS
PROMISING RELEVANCE.
WE STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN THE
FREEZING POND.
THEY DANGLE PROMISES JUST OUT OF REACH,
SUGARY LIES WE CLING TO,
LIES THEY TELL US WE MUST CLING TO.
UNTIL WE REALISE, ALL TOO LATE, IT WAS A
MIRAGE
A NARCISSISTIC TOOL HAND CRAFTED JUST FOR
US.

SO BEFORE WE EVEN BEGIN TO GROW UP
WE'VE GOTTEN TOO OLD.

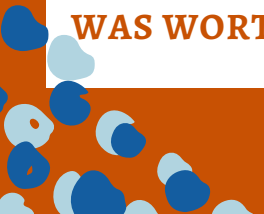




MY SPINE, STILL INTACT.
MY PAGES, WHILE BENT WITH SOME FOLDS, STILL
WHOLE.
I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE I'M ORIGINAL IN SOME
SENSE,
AND MY COVER ONLY HAS A COUPLE OF
WATERMARKS.

I'VE BEEN IN POSSESSION OF ONLY ONE OR TWO
OWNERS,
PERHAPS PASSED AROUND IN ADMIRATION OR
WONDER TO THEIR FRIENDS.
THEIR EYES SOAKING UP MY BEAUTIFUL PHRASES
AND STORIES,
EAGERLY EATING UP THE PLOT,
INSPIRATION OR SIMPLY A WAY TO PASS THE
TIME.
I WAS CHERISHED
WANTED
LOVED
ADMIRE.

THE NEON STICKER IS SLABBED WITH BURNING
PURPOSE OVER MY NAME,
AS TOXIC FUMES SEEP THROUGH LAYERS OF MY
BODY.
THE YELLOW PRICE TAG THAT AN OLD BOOK
SELLER DECIDED
WAS WORTH MY ENTIRETY.






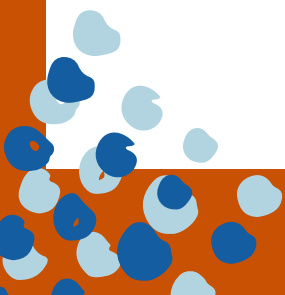
A BIRD? IN THE HOSPITAL?


LUCY ANDERSON

THERE IS A BIRD IN THE HOSPITAL. THIS IS A LOCKED UNIT, SO IT'S UNCLEAR HOW THE POOR CREATURE FOUND HER WAY INTO MY ROOM, BUT THERE SHE IS, BEATING HER WINGS AGAINST THE WHITE WALLS. I TRY TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT KIND OF BIRD SHE IS. DOES SHE HAVE THE DARK, TRIANGULAR WINGS OF A STARLING? THE PLUMP BODY OF A CHICKADEE? THE LEAN BEAK OF A SPARROW? EVERY TIME I ALMOST HAVE A GOOD LOOK, SHE FLITS AROUND BEHIND ME. THE NURSE'S STATION STARTS BUZZING, AND THE NURSES AND TECHNICIANS CROWD AGAINST THEIR OWN, UNLOCKED GLASS TO GET A PEAK AT THE FLYING CREATURE. IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT THEY ARE AFRAID OF THE BIRD. BIRDS DO NOT KNOW ABOUT SECTION TWELVE. BIRDS DON'T HAVE THE WRISTS FOR HANDCUFFS. I WOULD IMAGINE IT WOULD BE TERRIBLY HARD TO GET A BIRD TO SWALLOW AN ATIVAN PILL. A BIRD LOOSE IN THE WARD TAPS AT THE FRAGILE GLASS OF PATIENT VS. KEEPER. A BIRD COULD START PUTTING IDEAS IN PEOPLE'S HEADS.




I GOT SENT TO THE HOSPITAL BECAUSE THE HOSPITAL IS “SAFE”. EVERYONE KEEPS USING THAT WORD. ON THE ONE HAND, I KNOW I AM SAFE IN A CONVENTIONAL, NARROW-MINDED VIEW OF THE CONCEPT. BUT THE REAL CONCEPT OF SAFETY IS SOMETHING BIGGER. IN MY MIND, ONE CANNOT BE TRAPPED AND SAFE AT THE SAME TIME. I AM SAFE, BUT ONLY BECAUSE I’VE BEEN FORCED INTO PRETENDING MY MIND IS AN INHABITABLE PLACE. I THINK I’M SUPPOSED TO BE GRATEFUL TO BE RECEIVING CARE, AND I CAN PRETEND I AM GRATEFUL FOR A LITTLE WHILE. I CAN PRETEND I AM CAPABLE OF BEING SUBDUED. I CAN PLAY A MASSIVE, FANTASTICAL GAME OF PRETEND, ALL UNTIL THE BIRD SHOWS UP. THEN THE PRETENDING GETS HARDER TO DO.







WHEN I WAS LITTLE, MY FAVORITE BOOK TO HEAR READ ALOUD WAS ABOUT A BIRD STUCK IN AN AIRPORT. IT WAS A METAPHOR FOR THE WAY THE HOMELESS FATHER AND SON, WHO LIVED IN THE AIRPORT, WOULD ONE DAY FLY FREE. MY MOM READ THE BOOK TO ME PRESUMABLY TO TEACH ME ABOUT HOW HOMELESS PEOPLE EXIST, A FACT THAT I WASN'T PREVIOUSLY AWARE OF. LATER IN LIFE, WHEN I LEARNED MORE ABOUT HOUSING INSECURITY, I WOULD THINK BACK TO THAT BOOK. NOW, IN THE HOSPITAL, I THINK BACK TO THAT BOOK. WHEREVER I AM TRAPPED, BE IT ON THE SCORCHING STREETS OF AUSTIN, TEXAS, OR THE LOCKED EMERGENCY UNIT AT MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL, THERE SEEMS TO BE A BIRD. I CAN BE AWARE THAT I'M TRAPPED AND GIVE IN TO THAT, BUT JUST AS I START TO CRUMBLE, A BIRD ARRIVES.

I AM CRUMPLED ON THE GROUND, SOBBING, DESPERATELY GASPING FOR AIR WHEN THE BIRD ARRIVES IN MY HOSPITAL ROOM. I TRY TO TELL THE BIRD TO GO AWAY. I AM EXHAUSTED, BONES GROUND TO CHALK EXHAUSTED, SOUL TURNED TO DUST EXHAUSTED. I AM IN NO MOOD FOR THE SHENANIGANS THE BIRD HAS IN MIND, BUT BIRDS ARE NOT KNOWN FOR GOING DOWN EASY. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN DIVE-BOMBED BY A MOCKINGJAY AFTER YOU'VE WANDERED TOO CLOSE TO HER NEST? HAVE YOU EVER FELT THE GUTTURAL HONK OF A CANADIAN GOOSE THROWN IN YOUR DIRECTION? BIRDS KNOW HOW TO GET WHAT THEY WANT, EVEN WHEN THEY'RE STUCK.





I TRY TO FIGHT THE BIRD, TO TELL HER THAT SHE HAS NO PLACE IN THE HOSPITAL. THIS HOSPITAL IS MY LAST STOP, I INSIST. SHE TWITTERS AND TILTS HER HEAD, EYEING ME. I THINK THE BIRD IS GOING TO REMEMBER HOW WE HAVE TO PLAY DEAD TO SURVIVE ALL OF THIS AND FLY AWAY, BUT INSTEAD SHE BEGINS TO MULTIPLY. SUDDENLY, THERE ARE BIRDS NESTING ON MY RIBS, BIRDS PULLING MY ARMS INTO WINGS, BIRDS PICKING THE LOCKS WITH THEIR ARTFUL BEAKS. THE BIRDS ARE EVERYWHERE, DAZZLING SHADES OF SCARLET AND MARIGOLD, SOME WITH LONG SLENDER NECKS, OTHERS WITH WHITE PUFFED OUT CHESTS. MY HOSPITAL ROOM IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN AVIARY, AND I THINK I EVEN HEAR THE CHILD-LIKE HOOT OF A BARN OWL. I CLOSE MY EYES AND IMAGINE THE STAFF SHRINKING IN TERROR AT THE SHEER POWER OF MY BIRD-SELF. IT IS NOT YET TIME TO GIVE UP. I AM LOOKING DOWN ON MYSELF AND MY FEATHERED COMPANIONS FROM ABOVE, AND THE POWER IS THAT OF A GREAT, SWELLING TIDE. I OPEN MY EYES. EVERY LAST BIRD IS GONE. I AM ALONE, LOCKED IN MY ROOM. I AM NOT SAFE, AND I WON'T PRETEND TO BE, BUT I REMEMBER THE BIRDS. I REMEMBER HOW THE LITTLE ONE FLEW OUT OF THE AIRPORT, HOW I FLEW OUT OF TEXAS, HOW I'LL FLY OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. PERHAPS THE BIRDS WERE A DREAM, BUT I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE THEY ARE THE REALEST THING I'VE BEEN CONSCIOUS OF IN A LONG TIME.







**"COULD YOU SEND ME A FEW
WORDS ABOUT HOW YOU
PERCEIVE ME?"
EMMA DIZIO**

**WHY WASTE AWAY
WONDERING WHAT
THEY'RE THINKING?**

**WHEN OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY
TO STUDY THE SHADOWS SHE CASTS,
SHE TURNED TO THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDERS
AND DARED HERSELF TO ASK.**

"HARD WORKER"

"A VERY FOCUSED PERSON"

"HARD WORKER, DEPENDABLE, MATURE"

"DISCIPLINED, (WHERE SHE WANTS TO BE ;))"

"HARDWORKING AND RESILIENT"

"RESISTS CHORES"



**A PATTERN APPEARS,
ONE WITHOUT RULES.**

**“STUBBORN”
“MOTIVATED”**

**“STUBBORN BITCH”
“DETERMINED. LOYAL.”**

**“DONKEY-HEADED”
“DON’T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER WHEN IT’S
SOMETHING DOABLE”**

**IT MOVES FORWARD AND BACK
TURNING THIS WAY AND THAT**

**“KIND. CONSIDERATE. FAMILY ORIENTED”
“UNPLEASANT”**

**“KIND, COMPASSIONATE, FRIENDLY, CARING”
“SOMETIMES SELF-CENTERED”**

**“KIND, CARING, GENTLE SOUL”
“FEISTY SHITHEAD”**

UNTIL I AM THOROUGHLY LOST.

**“DRIVEN.”
“DIRECTIONLESS”**





**CONSISTENT CONTRADICTION
IN HER EXISTENCE.**

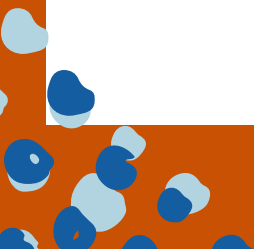
**RARELY ARE THERE INDIVIDUALS
WHO DECIPHER THE DICHOTOMY.**

**THEN THERE ARE THOSE
WHO LAY IT ALL OUT TO ME:**

**“I LOOK DOWN, ALWAYS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED
BY HOW BIG YOUR GRIN IS, PART EVIL AND PART
WHOLESOME.**

**GET IT?
YOU’RE SHORT”**

**HARASSMENT OF THE HEIGHT,
ASSESSMENT OF THE SOUL.**





**YET WELL I KNOW
THESE ARE BUT HINTS
OF THE INFINITE VERSIONS
OF MYSELF
RESIDING IN THEIR MINDS.**

**“GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR, BEST FRIENDS WITH
HER SISTER, LOVES CATS”**

**“PASSIONATE ABOUT CLOTHES, MUSIC AND THE
ENVIRONMENT”**

“CAN BE A LEADER BUT DOESN'T LIKE TO BE ONE”

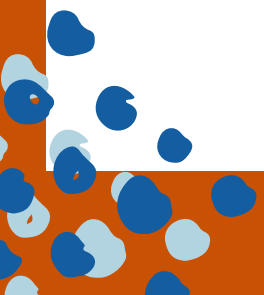
“DOESN'T TAKE HERSELF TOO SERIOUSLY”

“ENJOYS ITALIAN SLANG TERMS”

“INTELLIGENT, SCHOLARLY”

“BOHEMIAN”

**I HAVE NO HOPE OF KNOWING THEM ALL,
SO A MYSTERY SHE WILL ALWAYS BE.**







A CALL FROM THE DEEP

ABBEY RIBERIO


TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD LONG ABANDONED,
THE ENCHANTED, WANDERING SOULS WHO HEAR
MY WAILS.


TO THOSE PARCHED AT SEA, SURROUNDED BY
ENDLESS WAVES,
THE MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS, FATHERS AND
SONS, BORN OF BLOOD AND RUIN.
TO THE GODS THEMSELVES.

COME TO THE PATH LIT BY MOONLIGHT,
AND REST YOUR WEARY HEADS UPON MY PYRITE
BREAST.

DINE WITH ME ON THE GHOSTS WHO HAUNT US,
AS WE TEAR INTO THEIR LARYNXES.
NO LONGER SHALL THEY TORMENT OUR
MEMORIES AND SOB FOR SALVATION.
MY SONG WILL ERODE AWAY YOUR CHAINS.

I RESIDE ATOP A NEST OF DEBRIS.
SMELL THE SALT OF THE ANCIENT RUINS
UNDERNEATH OUR BODIES,
AND LET YOUR SHIPS SINK INTO THE ONYX
DEPTHS BELOW.
YOUR WIVES AND CHILDREN SHALL MEET YOU
HALFWAY,
AS I BRING THEM BACK TO YOU ONCE MORE.





**KISS ME UNDER THE ENDLESS STARS,
FLEETING AND IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH.
THEY WILL NEVER KNOW OF OUR TALES- OF
ANYTHING THAT IS ACCOMPLISHED HERE.
LET YOUR BLOOD OFFER YOU WARMTH AS I SING,
TEARING THROUGH FLESH AND BONE AND SOULS.
REVEL IN HOW THE WIND CARRIES YOUR
SCREAMS AWAY.**

**I PROMISE TO ERASE THY SUFFERING,
AS I HAVE THE THOUSANDS BEFORE AND FOR THE
THOUSANDS MORE WHO ARE TO COME.
THERE IS NO WAR ON THE ROCKY SHORE WHERE
WE REST.
LET ME TAKE AWAY YOUR ANGUISH.
FOR THIS LIFE, I SWEAR, IS NOT WORTH LIVING.**

**YOU HEAR YOUR BRETHERN IN THE DISTANCE,
SCREAMING FOR YOU TO COME BACK TO YOUR
SENSES.
IGNORE THEM AND LET YOUR LIDS FALL.
FOR YOU WERE DEAD THE MOMENT YOU HEARD
MY SONG.**

