

Snowclones

We burnt books to stay warm that winter
when the pipes burst. Everywhere
surrounded by dogs and sorcerers. Our signal
fires sang skyward in the belated wake
of passing planes, and thrice we depleted
and replenished our boughs, which burn blackest
when moist with pitch. The end

was not the end. The end was three ravens
plucking the optic nerves of deer carcasses.
Not the car crash signified but the satellites
feeding updates to the ongoing saga
of Carcrashgate. Snowmen parented
snowclones on our front lawns. No two
birthbloods alike. The doves

revolted. The snails wept. Nothing original
could be done because nothing original
was believed. Who would see us seeing
ourselves, now that mirrors were banished?
Still, each in our own manner, we persisted.
We chiseled cuneiform status updates, re:
what we talk about when we talk about

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what we talk about. Because how-not-to
had long since been plucked from our guts
like errant fishhooks, how-not-to like swallowed
nails phosphorescent in X-rays. Immunized already,
it hardly hurt when the snowclones grew old
and launched snowdrones of their own.

Someday, my darling, all this will be yours.

Selected Scenes from the Rag and Bone Shop

Aisle 7

cleft skull w/o jawbone, assorted femurs, rot black molars w/ blood flecked roots, blowfly maggot tunneling, torn ventricles, sutured gut wound, styrofoam cooler w/ kidney on gas station ice

Aisle 19

lying cheating etc, black is the new etc, pennies for etc, like stars like etc, like windows to etc, the glass is half etc, poor as pure as hot as etc, your ass from an etc, all your eggs in a single etc

Aisle 31

p.s. e.g. i.e. cf. etc. ibid. loc cit.

Aisle 4

bonsai in raku, potted petunias, cut chrysanthemums, tigers, callas, & turk's cap lilies, barrels brimming w/ acorns, fresh-raked leaves, bird-pecked seeds, a redwood sapling windbreak thin & terrible w/ potential

Aisle 13

down vest snagged dangling from ski lift, quivering speedometer needle, pissed-off bull elephant, rusting straight razor, blue pills dissolving in bathwater, aerosols rolled beneath gas furnace, paperwork pending on the uncle who got drafted and came back never the same

Aisle 26

aqualiloquy; avunculize; bromideogram; cithic; clairvoyager; cloakative; deknit; eternitarian; esotericide; fragrantoxic; gnathonize; hymnicize; ichthyarchy; jamblot; kleptomanagerial; locomotivational; manimanian melancholographer; necronotify; occidentify; palmoscope; qualmitude; refractallographic; sagittipotent; suffixinate; thural; turbulentiturgy; ubiquitousalk; vampirarchy; weequashing; xenophlamic; yelve; zygotypical

Aisle 37

AABB ABBA ABAB ABABBCBC ABA BCB CDC DED EE

Aisle 11

tarpaper, clapboard, railspike, rustbeam, plumbline, liquid level bubble, roofing nail, facing nail, tacks and staples, ornate footpedals, needles, spools, spindles, scalpels, forceps, vice grips, leadtin, rosin, fluxcore, jumper cables, coffee can, turpentine, flat chisel, v chisel, chamois, sponge, flint-knapped scraper

Aisle 1

a thorn in the paw; original sin; a torn-out rib better left alone

Ribs

The first rebel I cut from my chest
with the tomato knife and forked free
with the bbq poker. The rib hit dirt and slithered
snakelike away like fuck you Moses magic
as I stood still in the kitchen still boiling
a bisque and watching my ribskin distend--
a rat below a rug, a fingertip testing
a balloon from within--I hesitated to suture
the wound, my only salve
being honey and the strings but spittle.
I'd been told that a pain in the humerus
can indicate a superego attack, so I called
my wife and asked her to call me
an asshole. This worked for a time.

The second rebellion came as a miasma
like cooked cabbage, popped boils stinking
of a silver refinery. By now I knew
I was facing insurrection and therefore
set water boiling. Each rib I excised
I pitched in the pot and watched it writhe,
curled and shrunk little tapeworms, little
commas, little comatose little things
ossified back to bone as they should've been.
But I could never glue them home, nor
would I want to go on, being someone
who bears a grudge. So I fed them
to the dog. They splintered in her throat
and the veterinarian was displeased.

Shortly I ran out of ribs. One came as rat,
one as a fancy pigeon. I weathered weeks in pain
in the vain hope that by destroying small parts
of myself I would not have to destroy the whole.
But as anyone who's ever pulled a rabbit from
a ribcage knows, black magic only goes so far
toward disappearing a reflux and the answer
to failed surgery is always more surgery and even
the weirdling alchemists never turned lead into living flesh.

My Grandfather's Alibi

The bees were in the weeds when I arrived. The kitchen was on fire. I didn't put my dick in the mashed potatoes any more than anyone else did. I called ahead to make sure they allow blasphemy, and dogs. We reserved the group experience with the waxer, 6x bikini zones, I can show receipts. I can show social media posts followed by yuge emoji. Could a guilty man possibly get so many likes? So what if some ladybird peeled open and molted before me, it was only because I had my wife's permission, plus money. Anyway, I couldn't have done it, not with my arm all like that. Not with my teeth like how they are. Not that there's anything wrong with my teeth, mind you, I designed them that way on purpose before hatching myself from the egg. The egg shards are displayed in the Smithsonian and the sold-out crowds have never been more sold-out. My mother's womb is a deepfake. Anyone who says otherwise will have her bitemarks forensically examined. Find that Cinderella and cast her down a salt mine. Truth is, my fruitbats are thirsty and this conversation is boring me. Truth is, you know what fuck it. I did it. But it was never wrong.

My Grandfather Explains the Free Market

When the sunspot passed, the attractive white woman I wanted badly to fuck through windowglass turned out to be an elderly Japanese man whom I no longer wished to fuck. I was aware of everything around me becoming vaguely toxic, a fermenting mash of apple pips. But my intent was never organ damage. How could they blame me any more than any other creature swimming through mercurial waters? Yes, perhaps I had selected my heavy metals knowingly, true, there was that much. Perhaps I'd been cognizant that cobalt mines extract a human cost, that almond milk is predicated on unsustainable volumes of riverwater. But I'm one of the good ones. Self-reflection and all that. I was fully aware I'd need to update my eyeglass prescription if I were ever going to gaze clearly into my own void, which I was not. It was her fault, anyway, for having curves which left me no choice but to mansplain a busted transmission. Too tender, too like a mother's. Maybe care less next time? Maybe try having psychic premonitions of my libido? Maybe go ahead and try please just being an elderly Asian man next time instead of a highly-fuckable white woman, is that too much to ask?