

Entry

The ferris wheel races its linchpin
in the distance. Dirty lotuses
spread, half-glowing with the red flare
the town gives off to the night sky
blushing on the marshes. Palm trees stiff
sheathes, shadow-shot. I'm relishing
alone like a song, nighttime my old
sanctuary, having escaped the hotel
full of sleeping.

Figures separate

from tree shadows. A rope glides
over my leg and when the last of it
goes, my head holds a rhythm
of icepicks on ice: two women
led like mares into the hotel.
All around, a kind of mouth, silent
and moist, clamps down. Urine
smell, sound of dragging. My mouth
dries out. A lightbulb on a room.
I slink against the wall, look inside
this night's only bright.
Cricket sounds magnify and recede
like a beating. What I see past
the curtain makes my lungs
compress. The women are being led
into the room to a naked man
leaning against the corner
holding a
 glass coke bottle
casually. Wind lifts my hair.
The world goes. Still. Now the sound
in my ribcage finds the sounds
in the room. Merges.
With them. I can't look, can't can't.
Fear over my spine, a delicate
sensation, almost pleasant, dandelions
twitching.

A sound is crunching
the gravel. Teeth. I can feel something specific

behind me, a *heat*. I turn.
A herd of water buffalo
outblacking the night, their hooves
crunch down a slope and into
a pond where they become
weightless.

Muddy lotus leaves
laid thickly over water
I part them with knees hands
trying to get inside
avoid the drop
any sound and the thick growth
muffles my entry.
I'm in it now.

I know something outside is throbbing.

Down there the marsh grass
down there where the water goes dead
like blind beetles
clinging to the bellies of livestock.

Mud meeting my waist
like an old friend,
bullies me under.

I'm trying to escape what
is happening in my head,
the terrible empathy.
What is happening to those women
is not happening to me
and is?

The moon shot through
with lice, that dark thank god
and no stars
just the thick growth
of matted hair over the water
I blend my hair into.

Horns of steel glint
over the black lake which is so quiet

like the arm of an oil spill.

Hides are the warm tarps
that wrap the bones to the bones.

Icarus, On Watching His Shadow

Sun—you would devour me. This is what it means
to be stitched out: the ground a swelling,
Father a guard, I heir to air. Basking
I am held like the dank heart of a conch-shell.
See me feathered here, ebbing, a body
that wants to know the rim of air and matter,
what matters to a dropping pebble?
Cut the clouds, oh Father, and I remain
the weather. Beyond spine, beyond muscle
memory, can my body keep record?
Dust particles reverse in light-shafts, self severs
from seconds ago; still history minutely
blooms inside hoar frost's icy throat.
Once, watching a hawk spiral over knotty sheep,
I failed to see the crevice. My foot fumbled
on cliff rock—Father, even wandering through that
element, I never knew what earth meant.
Now, I claim my wings over you, ask:
what was warmth before warping in this star's
delirious flame? You hesitate to mirror
my ascent, glide below me, a hole
in the sky. Rent, I make of you my shadow.

To the Oracle of Delphi

1. Must there exist a feeling behind laughter or is it simply sound?
2. How can we know if there's a feeling behind a sound?
3. Is canned laughter still laughter?
4. Can canned laughter replace laughter entirely?
5. Though canned laughter is infinitely reproducible might not canned laughter also spur laughter further ("be contagious")?
6. How long can laughter be quarantined?
7. If a can of laughter were sent to outer space would we receive a can in return?
8. When opening a can of laughter is it better to use: a) a rock, b) a spoon, c) a bullet?
9. Can laughter "bleed"? If I tilt a can too far, can it "bleed" on my clothes?
10. Once a species goes extinct, will its canned laughter be considered: a) an oddity, b) an anthropological gem, c) evidence?
11. Is it best to bury cans of laughter, though they might come across worms, or throw them in the ocean, though they might come across whales?
12. When is the right time to start hiding cans of laughter?

Wreckage Candy

On the table gleam the fruits
polished by spit, two apples who,
having had a good cry,
are in bitter spirits;
candy-cane stripes
streak their puffy faces
tears, tears...

They too will sag and rot,
a good maroon
foundation for their
predatory babies.

A handful of cherries
strewn on the table
wink at the sun, blush.
They'll wrinkle
and shrivel into their hard-core
hearts, cling to the pit
like you cling to the rock.

Change, no matter
matter's seeming stillness,
rules. But there are other allures,
that mimic life and bother
its experiments.

This apple won't sustain
a blemish—it's me,
your Wreckage Candy.

You who wanted life, try life
-like. It won't stain
hands or dribble down faces
in sticky rivulets. Holding a real peach
lukewarm with sun
feels like holding a hand, alive
and dying.

I transfix time
in my fruit's empty tomb—
I'm the bonbon to time's bomb.

Learn to like best
the fruit that resembles fruit

only barely—neon bananas,
grape clusters tied with string—
start adoring the sting
of my bogus bling.

The day fruits go will be the day
you humans through rubble
rummaging will find my candy
in the wreckage and weep.
Why deny yourself
ache of varnished pleasure?
And if you feel like mourning further

I am purse for ghostly shapes:
inside me dwells a chunk of air
shaped like a pear. You can't touch it.
Lifelike teases,

so do unto your eyes
what you would unto your tongue.

Fooled, the hand
reaches for the plum and its weightless
heft plunges the brain into a void.

Don't knock
my knickknack,
I'm a copy only
if you believe in universal truth.

Spray-painted with
masquerading mauve
my husks hold
your attention.
Hulls of plastic gather their garters.
Grapes black and green glide
one by one, cold
like strings of pearls.

Honey, I'm always

topping the table, showing you
my tricky trinketry.

Already dyed, I will survive
life-sized you, lifelike you.

The Skunk

There is a place where stars convene
above a gnarled tree, all collected in all,
the point where all points meet,
like a weathervane twisting the pulp of life.

White and soft like a combed wig
a piece of light detached
from the black grasses and the woven
wire gate, slipped under the grey shadow
of the grey house with shutters nailed shut,
fled past that weeping fir whose needle wool
falls in haggard form abreast its bark

crowning whose furs, the stars!
The stars from the beginning
wink in evil ways
– the cold, evil wink of the immortals –
make others revolve. Distracted
by their glare, I almost missed
the scamper in the blades

a white flame
padding across the lane
on a black flame...

Yes, I'd seen day die in orange piles at the end
of the world but here a slice of it continued
undeterred and night received this
ripped white fire sprung from coal—you must forgive me,
my first thought was one of the treacherous stars themselves
had slipped through the atmospheres and I
would be accompanying it, soon.