

*excerpts from* WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

I. THE FUNERAL PARTY

First the casket  
draped in blue cloth— they've left  
you swimming there beneath the fiberglass or  
within it— a trapped whorl of light in polished  
fabric.  
I keep waiting

for you to surface & exhale—  
the grave streaming

from you in cerulean  
rivulets, sticking to your bony shoulders

like streams of kelp. And you will say, "this  
was never death

this was the ultimate party trick" applause  
ringing.

~

"Who told you that I was dead?  
How could I be dead?"

He holds a champagne flute in his  
pale hands, grins—

the music crawls down the aisle and  
over him—

weighs him down. He shrugs helplessly.  
The music clings

to him with crusted red pincers. He

sinks back into the ground—

gives a surprised shout- “There’s  
something down here.

I’m not alone.”

~

“The soul is muslin draped on form  
—grief the handful

of crickets in your mouth. If Erik  
found a bird

he would not hurt it. That is what this means.  
That’s what he meant.”

The minister falls silent: walled up in dark  
robes hands bunching out of his sleeves

like straw.

~

“She was crying. She asked me if I knew him.  
I said I didn’t.

She was holding her program as though it  
were injured. She was very careful. There were  
a lot of girls there—

their faces were very serious & lit from within  
—each carried a candle in her mouth.

I didn’t know them.

Then I thought that it wasn’t a funeral at all—  
but a baptism—

the coffin a font that spilled from itself

darkened the carpet

turned it to earth

*the hurtful sort*

*the darkened birth*

soiled our nervous feet. I waited for you—  
for a long time.”

## II. RUSSEL

. *n.* A reddish thing or animal.

I've tried to picture your body  
but can't. I've shot Tarot  
readers in the fucking face woke  
with only a scale of dragon  
stuck between my nails I hear  
people laugh & it's like they're  
arguing with me their tongues  
are an affront they're beggars  
bowing before gold their applause  
is a sickness the stop signs are in  
league with them the zoning committee  
does their dirty work.  
I wake up & old friends  
tell me to sleep it off like loss  
is something to wake from  
I wake & my dealer's in Hawaii  
he's a palette he's a bitch I hit  
Vegas see you paralyzed  
at the slots moving only to sip  
I wake sweating  
I see you hanging in the hall  
just the absence of light in a noose  
the swaying flesh of you  
like salsa meringue  
like trying to learn the steps she was  
that beautiful you met her as the oxygen  
left your brain when she moved her hair  
like a hawk folding its wings like a hawk  
folding its wings I come to you but the pews  
are full of nothing: red stretched  
to glaze strangers faces spaces like  
you did this to me like your  
call will be taken  
in the order

it was received

you will be put on academic  
probation you will be found  
wanting

you will pause in Yankee  
Stadium & your heart

will not

## HE LIVES IN HOUSTON WITH HIS RAT TERRIER, ZULU

1. He's dependent you could say he's a line 40 you could say that too sitting on the porch arguing with the leaf fall and stir.
2. Zulu does the dance of a crushed velvet nation.
3. Candy Mountain looms in the distance. The dog days of summer. The screen door comes down with malaria.
4. Pan to a mess of dogs wallowing in their own filth. They're innocent of their own bodies. He lies in the empty tub smoking a cigarette down to nub.
5. A dog in a panel of light is like a crocodile in mud. A dog in a gutter choked with rotten leaves is like a burgher in stained glass.
6. Zulu's long belly pocked marked macerated. Spots of coconut brown over the pink skin. A convicted palette.
7. Close up: fleas at the corners of a dog's eye.
8. The chorus of the Stray Dog's Song is "he died of a broken labia." The fleas are from New York City or the Sudan or Echo Park. They wrap their heads in scarves of discarded skin. They try not to see you seeing them.
9. Both Lowell and Berryman published poems that listed their home address. I tattoo mine on the cheek of the cab driver.
10. I spell it out in glitter across the thighs of the neighborhood chanteuse.
11. Laps craftily at it on the Futon of Broken Dreams. "How are the GOGS" he says and collapses heavily immediately.
12. Staying late at work yes it turns out every day this week I have to stay late don't wait up don't keep a plate or lick it clean.
13. My torch song can barely hold a candle.
14. I check into the kill shelter under an assumed name [I throw away my tags] you will know my lavender stare or I will die. I will eat straw. I will die.
15. Though I take my Benadryl and sleep underneath the seat just like everybody else. I am cargo with breath like a bakery. "Old yeller" walking up unsteadily. Dorothy and her little dog too. Who just wants to be a dog. Your dog.
16. "I just want to lay my head in your lap. Always I just want to lay my head in your lap. For your cunt is like blood and croissants to me."
17. Now I want to lay my head in your lap and be slapped away or "not on the mouth" or 101 Dalmations [erotic] "I'm a hound dog" I say in my sleepy little voice. Elizabeth Hall already vulpine & far away- I lap at my little bowl.

18. For Zulu is like a Shetland Pony and a desert fox. For she is a princess bird and the voice of reason. Her paws are full of menthol.
19. He says "bad dog." He says "I miss you" into the cone of silence. He says "I am not a monster" but sounds tentative.
20. I just want to have claws.
21. Craig Arnold in his hound's tooth jacket "smiling apologetically" hounds moving through the invisible grass. My long tooth grins.
22. Dogs that nest.
23. Herakles killing the little dog it "died like a dog" "This place sure has gone to the dogs" looking at the pepto-bismal walls the single woman at the bar. She's his mother, naturally. The pages of her dog-eared paperback.,
24. "Hunted down like a dog." The tinchel closes B whispers. Fierce the two-footers club. I am being torn apart.
25. A dog like violin case with a dog inside it. You're too rough. You're always too rough. "Like cinnamon and first touch"

# TOURISM IS IMPORTANT

## THE SHERRIFS DREAM

Nightvale's town criers have cross-stitched their mouths shut and stapled their eyes open. The benches are all broken. No one sits down anyway. No one can fit their broken wings beneath their cloaks. A skin condition that makes its victims appear timelessly sad afflicts most. Prominent citizens drown in the carpool lane. Their makeup floats to the surface. Wine glasses clink together. They hate each other. They clink. Until one breaks and then the other. There is no such thing as vagrants. There is no such thing as home. The sun has a tic. No one can afford flowers but the children stand very still in the garden. Until the cold snap cracks.

## THE CANDIDATE'S PROMISE

No one will  
Have to be  
Anyone  
Ever again, in fact  
It will not  
Be  
Allowed.

## REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENTS

Streets swallow their own tails.  
And choke.



## RUMOR HAS IT

No one has lived here for years. You're one of them. One of the  
No ones. A woman is a fire and no one is invited. Anyone can watch.  
No one can help.

## THE WEATHER REPORT

I have missed you for longer than I can recall. I've heated hail  
In a cast iron skillet. I've woven butter. I've shaped the honey  
Of your hair.

## RECREATION

You go to the zoo  
So the animals  
Can watch  
You.

## EATS

At the diner you finger the pie you eat the pie  
Stirring up a finger from beneath the meringue.  
It's your finger.  
The ring won't fit the stump. The waitress  
Nods to the car outside. If I could leave this place  
I wouldn't.

## BEST FRIENDS 4VA

Either

You get the check or I do or we are still arguing as the  
Flames change us I'll bet you'd look beautiful  
In a hospital bed eating warmed up hail

With a fox instead of a phone

Nothing below your elbow now but the Poet will call the absence  
Tenderness even as it-

## PET CARE

I'll bet this animal is stuffed  
With us

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS IS NEXT TO CITY HALL WHICH SHINES LIKE NEW  
SKIN AFTER YOU'VE PEELED AFTER YOU'VE RUBBED AFTER ALL HOPE HAS BEEN  
SNUFFED

Do these machines operate on sadness alone. Does anyone have an extra veil Does anyone have an extra  
these stunts sitting at the kitchen table are too dangerous for any but the most trained professional.

## MARRIAGE

We share one eyelash between us.