

[enduring.]

From movies I'm lead strongly to believe
ambulances in Baghdad
sound exactly like ambulances in Paris—
that very specific, European, high-pitched eh-uh, eh-uh;
unlike the counterpart, blunt, American whoo-whooh.
The sound lays wait somewhere in memory,
somewhere in cerebral matter,
like a Babar Christmas special:
finding Santa in the attic,
finding Jesus on a tree,
the bad guy Rhino at the same Joyeux Noël dinner—
and he's not so bad after all,
and he gets his saxophone in the end
and reprunes the bushes to make amends and plays us out on a sweet melody.
Why don't real villains just want friendship and wind instruments?
I know a man drowning in the Sandbox,
and I'm unable to find a child's-yellow-plastic-toy-shovel and assist.
He searches—
debriefed of military / recommitted in blue jeans—
for absolution in a familiar Arabian foreign nation
like the King of Elephants for Father Christmas and his reason.
From Sergeant to Civilian, he
—my dear human—
cannot make a go of it in the states anymore,
like my sturdy grey Elantra stuck in the blizzard muck at the top of a hill
(sometimes I have to dispatch the sedan in reverse).
He's an addict for shellshock,
roving for a fix sans regard for detriment or glory.
It's a need to fulfill:
To douse / To torch / Whichever comes through more struggle.
No one infamously bombarding the beaches of Normandy
knew he'd be a hero,
did he?
They each martyred or victored—
he only survives.
He's our American Idol third-place finisher;
leave him to his own devices...
and the reticence of a few later tour dates.
I'm unsure of what he drinks—
except that it's too much;
it's rivaling reservoirs of small Germanic lands,
securing his veins diluted,
quieted: a bloodstream less concentrated.

[enduring.], Page 2, continue stanza

Quell a fire in the belly,
images shrapnelled into the mind,
ticking to be disarmed.

His stillness—mistaken by fellow bar patrons as innocuity—
is a malicious, science-class-full of potential energy marinating.

A gun is sound-effected as “bang” for American children,
but “pan” for French counterparts.

Sirens do not sound the same
everywhere

to

every

body.

[heavy is the head.]

We are taken in easily
by fanciful stories.
We like to feign happy.
We like the lie.

Did you know
nobody ever found a treasure map
anywhere but in legend?
Only in books, movies, and/or song?
Yet,
I've been sure six or seven times
in my life
I have come across a real one—
a genuine thing of pirate relic.
I'm about to be rich...
until it's just somebody's
fourth grade social studies project.

I heard you need a permit
to excavate sunken treasure.
A permit
prior, that is.
Permits take weeks and months to come in,
and I'm not just abandoning—reabandoning—a shipwrecked fortune.
This is not something easily found.
This is not something I'll hoist my oxygen tank

If I had a treasure
sure I'd bury it, then map its place in a
tattoo on the crown of my head.
You can only get it off my cold, dead body.
I'm not shaving my head more than once.
It's an act of commitment
to ink it on in the first place—
I'm not the surrender sort.
I'm the treasure-seeking sort.

You did know
this is actually
about you and me,
right?

[secretary.]

While I'm waiting for my ship to come in,
I've hired up some swimming lessons.
Treading water in an ocean is tiring.
Doggie-paddling isn't getting me far,
and also withdrawing my potential.
I need to conserve energy for more than bill-paying.
I've never been calm enough to longterm backfloat.
I need some marketable-realworld-skills.
What if my ship—
not *mine*, not like I *own* or *lease* it,
just the one metaphorically, nautically approaching
presumably to fulfill my lofty prophecies—
is hijacked by pirates?
What if it's the kind of boat that
drops anchor way out beyond the surf?
What if I get on it—
climb up the ropeladder, pop a Dramamine, settle—
and we're shipwrecked?
I'll have to swim back or elsewhere.
My great-grandfather was shipwrecked—
and I do mean in the literal sense.
More than once.
His whaling vessel shattered on an African shore,
so I believe the story was relayed to me.
Everybody at home in Norway just went about,
until he came home—
he knew how to swim.
So did they.
And no one at home in Norway thought it bad,
thought it strange,
thought it something that shouldn't be.

[cocktail party.]

There is only a momentary pass of
glimmer and glitter
and staled lust
across his eye telling anyone
looking
right then
that, yes, he and I were something
and I shouldn't bother denying it
in this company
but also
shouldn't rise up to confirm
quickly.
Just
let everyone
figure it out.
Because this hour I am
sure I was
in love with him,
madly.
And next hour,
I'll think it was never so very
strong.
So I'll pretend whatever
the moment demands.
I'll look at
the way the mountains are
through the windowpanes—
the way they curve into the sky,
the way they're not holding a color I have a name for—
this is what I will
look to focus on
while his words
wiggle like mites
into my ear canal
for me to embrace and swallow and reform in my brain
later.
The way his vowels are encased
but not covered
by the consonants surrounding—
like teeth in the mouth
of a dog snarling his lips.
The way thoughts start out from
behind his molars

[cocktail party.], Page 2, continue stanza

with a click in his throat.
And if he says the
five letters
of my name
in his haunting,
lighter than the rest of his words,
he's held me in the crook of his arm
way—
I will
look
at him
and forsake the mountains.
I will make his mouth meet mine.
I will pretend every moment I've been
sure I love him
madly
still.
But only
if he says my name.
Because I know he can
say it in no other
way than this.