

Excerpts from *The Lost Dog Project*

1.

I am imagining our daughter.
Really I imagine my daughter, but a detail of her is that
she is also your daughter—

No, a detail of her is that you are her father.
It is a detail of you, too.
Often I imagine you.

That you're a rockstar and a scientist.
That you have saved the world once already.
That you will save it again soon.

That you asked me where
I dreamed of living.
I answered: here.

So we moved here.
And we have never left since—

we have not even arrived yet.
If we are always on the way somewhere—

we can just say that we will never go from it.
Once we get there, we will stay.

The problem is I am still
imagining you.
The problem is in my imagination
you know where you want to end up and you want
to end up with me. The problem is
in reality, I want us to end
up there, too.

I was imagining my daughter.
Now it is night and I've lost her.

At night I feel that I've created a world I can only share with ghosts.
Every night the same shape-shifting sounds.
Like they could be words, but wont. Like you might be
trying to speak to me—

but you aren't. You haven't
known how to speak in years, not for yourself.

You let me speak for you.
You let yourself go unspoken.
You laugh or loudly swallow your soda.
Say nothing.

When I speak to my daughter—
I'm trying to get her to come in
to focus, to turn around
and face me—when I speak
to her, she turns
but when she turns she disappears. And her face
is a swirl and at the center of the swirl is the back
of your head.

2.

When the dog went missing, the father
searched
for the mother—

it was in the morning, when the dog went
missing, after the alarm went
off, she rose

first. That mother. She noticed the dog
hadn't stirred, the door
hung open, let light

in to tickle his dish. The father
was up, with a groan
to the mother, in stitches—

“he finally figured
out the kitchen door
handle”

she wheezed
then he said

“I'll find us
another—”

in the evening. After dinner
when the hunger
passes, and the mother
mouths around corners
of toast—

“when would be
a wise time to start
this texture”

is asked. The mother
has eaten, the father
slips sleepily out
through the kitchen. To search
for the dog.

3.

You must know, Mrs. Manicholy—
I never meant to hurt your daughter.
I couldn't have
wanted to hurt her if I'd wanted to.
Does that make?—

No. Nothing does. Nothing
you say, or I say makes any
sense anymore.

I wasn't trying to. Not to lie, or to eat.
I wasn't trying
to braid you up in all this. The stuff
my dreams
became of, Mrs. Manicholy.
Mrs. Manicholy, your daughter
is a very sick girl, Mrs. Manicholy.
Didn't you know?

I'm running these lines
like the flesh and the sauces, all of it—
right up the tube, to the tender. The way
we used to play
with our fingers, till the sun was up.
Play with your hair in the afterglow. In the ever—

A translated translated translation station. Across the ocean.
Crack of whip and smell of freedom—

a promise a promise a promise a promise.

Mrs. Manicholy, I can change.
I am changing, have changed. I can and you can
believe me.

I fucked
up your daughter, your small
sparrow daughter. Her bones
were like bones. Only lighter.

I never read the books, and I'm sorry.
I never read the books and I know.
I'll regret it some day.

But forgive me, because I am asking—

asked her, she said no. She said
no with that voice-whirr
that computer sound.

It is going to collapse, she
said. It has. And so no.
And no. And no. Take away
your plastic dinosaur
with the hole in the belly.
Take away the mattress, all the shirts
with the patterns, the rhythm.

Take the smell away, the light of you
in my mirror. Take, too.
My errors. My mishaps.

Disheveled and shaken, she
stood in the doorway and thanked me
to take me away.

4.

He mashes. His words together, calls it homemade. Transnational cockney. Or something, or street-wise, I get it. Like it. Got lost, again in a memory, he took me by the jaw, turned my face to him, hard—worked on me though, I wince mightily back within. And I'll do it again, if I can, but it did. Somehow managed, the trick—lifts and folds me back inside, my body, open—mouthed, to my lungs comes a breath like undoing, a sandcastle. How a sandcastle melts, is still—something. To look at—him, sea-eyed, and all but—then nothing. Like yesterman.

So maybe. That's how he was able. To call me—that, rename emphatic as lumps, at the nape. Of the neck, I will say the new name, runs familiar. A fluid, course final. I curse on, the break where I limply reply I—have heard this—

before, stuck in strange, word reveal, while he spins. Light, of my four-lettered bare, theme like thread where, I clung, had I punctured each—tired, or swollen it seems I had fallen—in listless. In lung.

Like he's lymph, or the wheels on the under. The side, I don't show, belly-up when the cityworld crumbles.

5.

Where'd you come from
Mrs. M, the desert, a drum
circle? The block has gone
vacant, your daughter still
misses her baby.

Mrs. M, I was all
torn to bits and alone
when I met her
met you—and she knew.

I was all spin
and pitch, just a sorry
scared child in the forest.

The boys kept on calling
the street all green
light, her look
bigger, she wanted
a conquer

or quest, Mrs. M, she would
ask me. She'd screech
at my break, and she'd call me outside
my mistakes
they'd pile up by the bedframe.

Mrs. M, is a saint
is a story, a warden. Keeps me
keyed up at night
search the grounds
but there's no sign of water—

your daughter is looking
your daughter needs him
who will fill
up her basin, sweep wetly
the threshold of pawprints—

make fit
for the children, remind her
to take out the guilt
with the rubbish, right down
to the roadside.
Your daughter, she turns

and detests, in the pit
of her belly, the fortress
still heavy with ghost.

She hears rhythms
your daughter, Mrs. M, so cut
out the hysterics.
Blame the dogs if you will
but the truth is
they watch what you
cant, you just chant like your mother
might bubble up into her veins
with the right
and enough incantation.