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Says the King

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SAYS THE KING

A Thesis Presented

by

RUSHING PITTMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

May 2016

M.F.A. Program for Poets and Writers

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ABSTRACT

SAYS THE KING

May 2016

RUSHING PITTMAN, B.F.A., STEPHENS COLLEGE

M.F.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Dara Wier

A collection of poems.

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Part 1:

Human and Animal

bared teeth, straight face, shoulder blade, scaly thigh, whale skeleton, bruised arm, muddy corpse, spines and fins, wings razoring, wine lips, raw brains, bloody cheeks, blood spritz, alligator teeth, normal skeletons, sexy hair, apple cheeks, broken leg, thin pink veins, talons, flat chests, empty cranium, insect wings, concrete tumor, a baby's head, startled bones, osprey feathers, legless frog, a druid's foot, placenta, soft tissues, blood vessels, a partial skeleton, pigeon tongue, two headed calf, urine, sweaty thigh, pig tail, war bones, He-Woman, dark tendrils, death poses, oracle bones

Skin

Let me tell you something about the real skin,
real skein, not swans in flight but
tangled, labyrinthine,
as in knotted more than interlaced,
pressing a button too hard.
The vibration in staccato in talk,
embedded dangerous ticks and trips,
falls. It doesn't take much to hurt.
If we could see, who would have
the most lacerations on their lips?
You or me?
"Injury" is purely English
development, "hurt" etymology
"to strike, collide" to "run at."
Are you coming with me?
Stay with me in the dark,
and let's smoke for hours under these Greek
stars and history.
I want to go back to the old music
when I wrote slaps on pieces
of paper and stuck them in your locker.
When sex was incredibly hard.
Clumsy heavy fingered touching
while watching cable TV,
lights off, unzipped jeans,
too afraid to look at one another.
You're beautiful.
I know everything now.
Pollen on my shoulder,
we save a lightning bug
from inside the house.
It's difficult to know where
our line began.
What was the first word I said to you?

The first part of your body I saw
was your back, your shoulder blade surfacing,
 arching to the light, as if catching a breath.
I knew that in you there was a body, a muscle, a spine,
a warm knuckle, folded in soft pearl,
 touchable.

**We Met a Long Time Ago
in a Building Made of Stone**

You tore into my chrysalis like a splendid virus.
 Your sting found my vein, and I welcomed you.
 Your voice turned along with my voice,
 and we sang happy notes out the window.
That first night, we were almost quiet in bed
 You touched my chin, and my stomach froze.
 I opened my mouth, and we witnessed our first blizzard.
We leaned into the snow. Sucked ice.
 That was the saddest time for a while.
 I flew to Norway and bought a knife.
 You walked barefoot, flew off with the other birds.
A perfect V into the blue.
 I became a maze.

**For Eight Years,
I Didn't Love You**

Before I'd forgotten you completely
 I burned all the memorabilia.
I remembered your nipples,
 how they were little domes
 and the rest of you filled with rivers.
 How they waited for me
 when I was fifteen and horny and confused.
I caught something that night
 equivalent to your fingerprint.
I didn't know a person could take up
 so much space
 just to disappear.
 I forgot I was speaking to you.
After you left, I hid under a desk
 until it was light again. I made a point
 to watch sunrises and record them diligently
 in a composition notebook
 with a camel ad glued inside the flap.
I took to smoking in graveyards and waiting
 for ghosts to light up the sky instead of the stars.
 I planned my first tattoo.
When you returned, I was a mouse.
 Then I became a rat. I was proud of my longer tail,
 how it made the world more manageable.
 I filled my cheeks with the old
 blood of my rat ancestors
 and prayed to them every night.
You called it squawking at the moon.

Every

Sum, all, total, barring no one, without exception, totality, every single bit of,
no crumb unnoticed, each respective head all compete in one entire,
the saying is entire. I'm sorry that happened.

That whole event.

I cannot be what I want even though I don't have to be what I am.

Who I am.

And who is that?

I like the smell of soup.

I have shame under my ribs.

I like the moment right before things get scary in movies.

I like to see the faces before they know.

For a while, I thought I was the soldier running downhill

with his shoes untied, the guy who gets shot early in the film,

whose stutter is endearing, but lately

I've realized I'm the guy smoking at the darkest corner table,

and I really want someone to talk to me. To ask me their fortune.

So I can pretend to do something. Be good at something.

And sometimes I'm the one who throws you up against the wall,

who touches every part of your body against every part of mine—

I am almost willing again and again.

To Say It the Short Way

You don't trust me on the fire escape anymore
because I dropped the lighter—
it blew up like a tiny star beneath our feet.

I didn't do it for the sparks.

I'm not doing this for the sparks.

The shower is safe because it's filled with water,
and I haven't wanted to melt
into anyone in a long while.

I believe if I were to reassign it'd be with a cowboy's smirk
and an astronaut's brain.

I'd bother to visit the undersides of planets,
see the things the other guys would rather
read about and —

come back, touch my hips.
They hurt from when you last touched them.
I know I asked for it.

So do it again, afterwards,
if you're still into me.

Foxgloves

I

The foxglove is a tight weasel weed sustained by sunlight
and nutrients from foreign roots.

It is me and I was the foxglove in the supermarket
when the woman with big thighs asked,
“Can I help you, miss?”

And I hung in the air then, cocooned in spider silk,
swaying by my neck in a breeze.

From that angle, my feet were so small,
like my mother’s,
the skin pulled tight, blushing.

II

We tugged the Mason Dixon line from under the earth.
“It’s so strong,” you said
cutting it, splaying red across the states.

Sometime later a cowboy appeared out of the bushes, sputtering,
“What did you do?”
I didn’t feel guilty. But you did.

III

I liked you so I boiled my body over yours
and asked you to finger the inside of my head.
The one place with any virginity left.

I think you liked it.

Later, I found a book under your bed called
“Tips on Fingering the Brain of a He-Woman”

IV

I didn't lean in when we kissed.
I let you fall towards me as black falls
on the moon, tightening the sky.

V

I'd like to spend some time discussing your freckles
and how strange they are.
How I can always find a triangle.

That's called “consistency” and it builds trust.
I think my trust is hiding under the sink,
eating bad fruits and breeding flies for hobby's sake.

VI

Today I found your face between the forked-tail
of a swallow-tailed kite.

You ate a lizard from the top of an oak.
How could you stand the taste?

And how did that lizard get so far up, what was it doing up there?
That's called “chasing the sun”
and it gets you killed.

Stay down here with me little kite.
Come see the cattle egrets.
They stick close to the farmer and the dust.

What I'm really saying is
come here I am lonely please stay it's dusk I miss you.

Tiresias Reversed

I have loved you for ten years.

 We have a child named Tiresias, who hates going outside.
Remember that time we gave him to the sun and the sun said
 he'd be a better fit for Jupiter?
How could he say that about our son?

No. I know. Our son isn't real.

 Tiresias is that cat, and I've known you for 52 years.
We're so old we can't touch our toes,
 but we still bang like lions.

And, yes, that's not true. I'm not human.

 I'm a rose and you're a cloud.
I'm almost withered and you're drifting off
 to mate with other roses.

But really, when you kissed me on the subway
 it was musical, and I felt dirty in that little car
and no one knew my silicone cock dug into my pubic bone,
 and that's when I saw I'm the space between a river
and its bed. I'm invisible, all currents flow through me
 which is how I can hear every one
of your notes because you have moss hair and fins, and yes,
 there are different names,
but I go by Tiresias, and you're something like a mermaid.

Boston Letter

My entire life I've been hearing myself talk.

I imagine you saying my middle name.

I like it.

Say my middle name to me when I fall asleep.

In that instant right when I fall asleep.

When I probably won't remember.

I don't know yours.

I don't know much.

What does obstricate mean?

Why is the sky so blue in Boston?

Tell me why it grew cloudy when you got in your car.

I'm my only source of information.

I say the walls are yellow for happiness,

but the floors say otherwise.

They're tired of boxes and squares.

They demand more inventive architecture.

I'm not in it anymore.

You're not in it.

There was never an "it" to be in.

Sometimes when I shower, I want to disappear

into the walls. I like hot water.

How it makes me want to escape into tiles.

I like the idea of my house eating me.

It's been hungry for years.

I don't know how to feed it.

It snarls at me as I fall asleep.

That's why I need you to say my middle name.

I'm sorry I can't do the same for you.

You say things, and I go silent.

I'm mainly in the air then.

Feeling what you said but not

feeling a need to respond.

I like to think that's real listening.

Tell me about the pigeons outside the window.

What sort of nutrients do they find around here?
Do pigeons eat snow?
Have you ever seen a pigeon's tongue
stuck to a block of ice?
You should just say you did.
Like how I say the spoons are always gaping
as if they just saw me do something bad.
I try to keep the bad to myself,
spray it with disinfectant and stuff it in the freezer
with all the heads and limbs of people
I didn't know but wanted to know.
That image was morbid of me,
but I liked it when I said it
which is how I feel most of the time.
I don't want to apologize anymore.
I found that if I say things in a soft voice they sound better.
Try it: I don't want to apologize anymore.
More real, right?
Or at least kind?
I'm trying this softness in all areas of my life,
which is why I'm writing this.
Read it softly by soft lamplight.
When the room is bigger than it was yesterday.
When the world is God's mouth laughing
then tell me if you have an answer.

**You Looked
Like Something**

sharp as honey.
A plastic sheen in your hair
and your eyes with that factory sparkle,
that contrived sexy look.

The look that said you'd never
mispronounce anything,
your commas live where
commas are supposed to live,
your house with a sturdy mailbox
and well-groomed dog.

I threw up water and ran with the birds
through a pasture made of blue.
None of us could fly and we liked it that way,
slivers of dirt in our talons,
bits of earth in our bones.

You hung back at the trading post
a cigarette in your mouth
suddenly cowboy
lasso and pistol
your best friend a horse
you called out to me "Hey bird!"

When I turned back we learned
that cowboys and birds
have amazing sex.

Clothes don't even have to come off.
It's mainly a lot of staring at one another
and flapping your wings
adjusting your belt buckle till you come.

Summer Hours
Listed in the Fall

I never pawned an ancient Roman coin,
 smoked 8,760 cigarettes since last seeing you,
 saw a purple tribal god in the sky,
 dreamed of fighting a parking meter with a pain ball gun,
got upset when the key lime pie slid off the dashboard,
 said I liked hot weather,
 said cold weather was any better,
 pretended to be a vegetarian,
snuck cold cuts when I was drunk.

Fashion turned to flannel; you wouldn't fit in.
 You fit nicely in a puzzle box.
 I don't like you in a puzzle box.

I want you wide out in the open for easy scope targeting.

I want the sun to always rise behind your back.
 I want to catch that moon rising above your head.

I never said I want hot chocolate or to go apple picking.

There is only this tree and these leaves.
 There are only these boots and these leather rings.

I will paint the walls blue, blue, blue.
 I'll consider calling you.
 I'll bike till I'm thirsty.
 I'll never text while driving or skip soap.
I'll never pass out bread with dirty fingernails.
 I'll never shit around.
 I'll always call surgeons by their first name.
 I'll always legitimately do my work.

No Thank You

to stand next to you
is an affront to the man standing opposite

I don't need to look at him to know
but I do anyway so when he comes to talk to us

I don't like afraid
and when he wants to know how we do it

"it" this thing we do
this unbuttoning of each other

when he asks if he's invited
I want to be like him

so this wouldn't happen when I'm near you
and when I'm not near you I would be ordinary

as you are ordinary when I am not with you
so that I won't be the not-close-enough

this noteless
how much time have I spent

under the sheets staring down
thinking I was the wrong shape for you

how much longer will I be
the not-close-enough

I laughed at the man
said no thank you

said it just like that

no thank you and laughed.

as if all was just a joke
a prank

I'll go on being your
"not-close-enough"

even though I have a note
between my legs

and harmony would be a clear place
to go from here but they say

our harmony is jagged with schism
and the man in the background

is asking how we work
saying he wants to see

and I'm just laughing
no thank you

just like that
no thank you

**The Women in the Bathroom
Are Hawks**

washing their wings in the sink,
dribbling water from their beaks.

It's a spring day in winter.

Everyone's eating hotdogs and hamburgers.
No one knows where to place their feet.
Spilled root beer and your new ring.

This is a "you" poem.

No, this is a "tree" "concrete" and "tall buildings" poem,
a "remember to always look up" poem.

This is a "city" poem,

alleyways, dirty snow, and that smell of hot pavement,
musky dream ether,

That ready smell you have in the morning,

when my reptilian brain perks up,
heated like a komodo dragon for you.

This is a "you" poem

because you wanted a "love" poem.

In the building down the road

there's a whale skeleton that takes up a whole hall.
We stand in its rib cage.

Abraham Lincoln loiters

in front of an art gallery.

I twirl your ring in the subway.

I'm afraid of subways.

I twirl your ring on the elevator.
It's a 1930's box in the wrong time.

I'm scared it will stop
as it does in my dreams right before it plummets
and there's fire and beheaded women wailing,

but excuse me, this is a "love" poem—

I'll feed you daffodils
and comb your hair.
In my dreams that's how I love.

Begging for Sex

an asteroid

the remaining imprint the Chicxulub crater
in the breastbone of the Yucatan,
shocked quartz and rock
freckle,
sparkle white gas,

clusters and sinkholes and gaps

you are in my bed, reading Sylvia Plath, and discovering
love

for poetry in response to my new obsession
with bed death

yesterday my pubic hair caught in your fingernail
and you

tugged till it split off,
broke, like a piece of twine,

a brittle twig

how does the wind feel against a scaly thigh?
what about the feathers?

wind between the afterfeathers

once you laughed something maniacal
and the dinosaurs in my heart
came back to life

in a tremulous roar

the airfoil shape of wings, the beating

they thrust up
 from the earth
 and the Yucatan in my lungs
 gasp

afterward
 I asked if my teeth looked sharper
 when you tested their edges you
 gasp too

Eclipse

predawn my love the stuff of sticks
 ashen cave walls
 a thumb smearing
 I was here

your diamond ring
 between mountains
 on the moon

 you are a red eye hydrogen bomb

I bite the sun
 the opposite taken
 the rim illuminates white

the leaving and the taking
 the sky a charcoal blanket

I'll sleep in murk water
 graze my toes against alligator
slick skin
 for you
 catch the moon mid rise
 crush
 it dust and rock
 for you
 and when the stars call
pitch falling
 your conscience
 puffing
 out

 I'll pillow
 the back of your head
eclipse with you

Herbert

Bobcat and coyote are not for me.

They are for someone else, yet they have
been in the atmosphere since I rode a painted horse
in a circle.

I'm syllogism and snap. I've forgotten the meanings
and send you messages in tight balls.
I leave them at your doorstep.

I found the perfect picture for you earlier
and didn't take it.

It made me realize that my silhouette with clothes on is a man.
I've named him "Herbert," I see him most days.

I've forgotten how to make sounds into words.
Tomorrow I'll wake as a bird
and when I snap at heels
I'll be a dog named "Saul" with no biblical reference.

Next time I see you, hang my hands over my head,
tell me trees don't have eyes, aliens don't exist,
that we're in a cloud over an uninhabited planet
breathing a galaxy with no name.

I think I'm living
to see something else.

Part 2:

Animals and Mythological Beasts

Oyster, clam, snake, spider, swan, lightning bug, dog, chicken, volcanic demon, alligator, hawk, antelope, komodo dragon, whale, cattle egret, unicorn, squirrel, scorpion fish, bobcat, tadpole, gnat, passenger pigeon, wolf, indigo snake, buck, worm, dinosaur, crow, blowfly, coyote, dragonfly, frog, duck, phoenix, swallow, sheep, sea urchin, clown fish, mole, armadillo, bear, mouse lemur, troll, wild dog, elephant, cat, nestling

Thoughts in the Time of Bobcats

I'm usually not thinking anything,
more constantly on the edge of something—
a recent obsession with a trans guy's accident
transitioning into energy instead of a man.

I want to stop saying I want.
If I say it enough it might disappear
I want I want I want

or it will stay, a sucking thing that surrounds me,
turning me into a vampire with bed head and poor nutrition,
no benefit to my existence
other than my ability to decrease the population
by soul sucking, creating the dead by demanding too much.

I'm a break taker.
The smallest activity grants break time—
picking leaves off the floor, reading the news,
testing nail polish, wondering why there's neon yellow nail polish.

Polish is much like the word polish,
and Spanish moss was used to stuff voodoo dolls,
is used as a prop in films taking place in the South—
ages trees.

The other day a cat ate the head off a mouse in front of me
as if it were a polite thing to do,
at least acceptable.

I said to no one in particular, "I'll put my cigarette out
anywhere, except on myself" as if that said something,
but only skimmed against the head of a thought.

If I could see, my brain would be covered in grazes,
the inside pink and untouched.
And it makes me think,
people often shoot themselves in the head

because sickness is rooted in the core.
I take this as a sign of hope for myself, but what if there's
something wrong in my gut?
I like to hug a pillow when I sit.

Maybe I'm hiding something from myself.
I'm not the best at self-awareness, but can catch a good whistler
in a screaming crowd and sometimes
I search for bobcats in the backyard.

It makes me wonder, why do we shoot an enemy in the heart,
but not ourselves,
when it really comes down to dying?

**Oxbow: A Meandering River
Cuts Itself off**

I try not to look.

I hate when nature kills itself,
 like those whales that jump out
 of the ocean to never return
 or that nestling
stuck between the rails
 of my fire escape,
 five stories up.

I can only hear lawn mowers,
 men spitting out tobacco.
 Whatever I meant to do, I forgot.
 Something about a dust storm,
 then a utopia,
 a proselytizing man with a large, black beard.
 A documentary?

My kneecaps jam into place.
 Hard rocks.
 Really just startled bones.
 I meant to ask somebody something.

But that stupid nestling
 and it's ill proportioned body,
 it's swollen beak
 wrapping around it's face
 like a fat worm.

It's something ugly.

But it just hasn't grown yet.

 It's eyes aren't even open.

 This is a reflex, I know.

 This feeling.

 I stutter out a word.

 I miss what I said.

Modern Armadillos

What is the function of the placenta?

These close evolutionary relatives within the abdomen
of the mother's belly:

Elephants, bats, humans,
horses, dogs, moles.

The placenta's soft tissues and blood vessels.

A shrunken skull from the island of Flores.

Armadillos walking on knuckles.
Body armor.

Glyptodonts.

A bear skeleton on his hind legs.

The posture as it confronted man 20,000 years ago.

Prehistoric humans also used caves, hence the paintings.

An ambiguous dog.
A footprint.

Who won?

The Story of Horses has a classic and a revised version.

Please touch this footprint.

Can you feel the claw marks?

A mouse lemur on a green wall.

A cattle egret pinned up by its beak.

Wild dogs dead eyed. A fake sunset.

Why was the Florid hominid so small?
The short story: disease
or heart ache.

Alone out on that island, watching those European
ships surf by,
cracking nuts against a rock.

Only her partial skeleton found.
Her eye sockets filled with worry.

Life is awful.

I'm not kidding.
Right now we have stuffed snakes wrapped
around our necks, and I want to make tea
like the Native Americans.

This is all one hard-boiled egg isn't it?

So let's kiss each other.
Eat the largest cookie we can find.

The little hobbit
in her glass case night after night, dreaming:

What are those things thrashing about in the water,
how can they move so fast,
those blankets in the wind so soft?

The Squirrel

Father's father died and you fell asleep.

What's in this other than coffee grains and sausage rolls?

This is that morning, when the squirrel died by the pool,
and we all missed Father's father,

but if he had been there, what would we have said?

Oh hail the mighty stock master! Oh hail Qualcomm and cotton!

I haven't learned numbers and don't plan to.

They have too many hidden meanings.

What does a coffin mean? Why do we box up the parts?

Father's father is a cattle egret on the ground asking

for a screwdriver, "Vodka" he gasped

on the last evening.

I stood by the hospital window and watched the sun set

a sharp orange peel behind the white Baptist steeple.

"What'd he say?" I asked.

"Vodka," he gasped. Father squeezed his foot, shook it

like you'd shake a hand.

That night, I fell asleep and dreamt of Father's father.

With a rainbow aura he came into my room

wide-eyed, asking, "Vodka?"

I tell you over the phone, "Father's father died and now I'm a recluse.

This must be my response to grief."

You fall asleep, and I open a book on cadavers.

Once a man opened a crate, expecting ham and cheese,

but found a muddy corpse.

I felt that way when the squirrel died.

Letters to Slug

I

The Mesopotamians must have dreamt of different things.
Not of you under a white blanket covered in beauty,
covered in sunlight, of winter outside my quiet apartment.
I couldn't tell you, Slug, how often I've wanted you
all day long. How I sat in the theater, letting image after image
reflect on my eyes and slide on in a mirage, a pattern, hearing the
eerie sounds of an owl hooting, a skirt uplifting, as the woman
on the screen in the white t-shirt runs screaming for the neighbor's help.
But the neighbor isn't awake, and the killer drops his axe on her silently
as in a silent kill and the needle falls: The End.
Slug, I couldn't tell you how often I've dreamt. The happy endings
are slumbering as you sleep under a white blanket in my dream.
I fear a bear staring through the window at me.
Now this has gone on too long. I'm bothered.
I go to death too often. The utensils broken, the coffin too deep,
horrendous, soundless, cold. Why aren't I dreaming of the right things?
You under a white blanket, of sunlight, of winter outside.

II

I wanted happiness, but I screamed too loud, and the sky
sucked up my wish, spit it out in the form of a plummeting plane.
Slug, when I ran into you in the winter afternoon startling us both,
it was the plane slamming into my throat, and my wish
suddenly granted. You thought I would go away. But see, I'm here,
I haven't gone anywhere. I won't be taken in by the cold.
Do you think we could stay inside forever? I'm lost in the ecstasy
of your ritual. With you I don't imagine all those dark tendrils,
those cracked pipes, and thank you for carrying my sentiments.
I can only hold so much without breaking, without burning,
a soup of cloying, tear eyed crud.

III

You are my lump of clay as in the physical, the Other,
I speak to. Dreamers can see their existence ten fold
when speaking in low tones in an empty house.
I rub you over my entire body. You are my substance and my substance
your substance, fused. My dreams are gone in you and as you melt
they carry far off in the water, away many miles removed from my body.
Be the blowing. Keep always the amulets and charms in your mouth.
Glint up a storm. I won't stop watching. You are the door, the forestall,
separating my room from nightmares. Is this what they mean by love?
A weakening, then a summer, a heroine? This "keep me forever" business
similar to an open coffin where the corpse isn't a corpse but a live person
looking at the funeral parlor and finally feeling awake?
Take me in the nearness. It's working.
These nightmares, these images, ruined by our new religion.
Blanket me in white.

V

Do you still wonder what's bothered me?
I saw a bear that didn't hurt me. I saw a shark, it swam away.
A plane disappeared, I didn't disappear. A subway derailed,
I didn't derail. I'm on my heels leaning back away from the face
of the grey and terrible. I'm hanging from the husk of what you just said,
"Irrational. That's why I'm here." You here instead of the bear or the plane
or the shocking fall into alligator infested springs. I'm a moth
to the macabre. You enable me to unclutter myself.
To throw out the wrong dreams. Thank you for laughing,
for being clean as clear as a hand above a questioner's head.
"Say it out loud and you'll laugh," you said.
Slug, please keep laughing. Tell me when I've thought it wrong
even when I might have been right.

Outside Your Resort It's Dangerous

I'm reading naked in bed.
I'm hap-song.

We happen chance met
by the water mill in the snow

on my birthday
the stars brighter than usual

sparse clouds
clinging to the sky

bits of a torn wet towel.

Life is dangerous like that
I said to you

the afternoon the F train
derailed.

I was at the beach.
I walked in tidal pools of salt

on bits of cracked shell
like plaster or bone

when you said the words "marry"
and "courthouse" and

"certificate" in one sentence

to pacify me, of course
my body filled with a constant

predicament, anxiety

as I saw a squall line of our endings
approaching me

what you offered
just a piece of fluff

in a storm

I'm sorry.

I sleep on my back
so I pushed your legs off.

I need to breathe
so I can move.

You don't deserve it—

my wild animal posture,
the hunched back and bared teeth.

Were we meant to meet?
I'm sorry I'm sorry.

I don't need proof.
I know you don't think I'm crazy.

Just this head of mine.

I'll build a calm that was here
before you and me,

before the before
before the nothing.

This is real.

Something called, to put it bluntly,
fear. A lie. Snakes in the rafters.

Your face and spiders together.

Not a Stapler

Sometimes if I'm lucky, I think I've found something
so I sent you a tree this morning,
leaves red ocher, some already fallen. You said you loved me
and placed it in the middle of your living room.
Later you threw a party in its honor. You called it
your queen tree, which caused many quizzical looks, but you
have that tendency like when you called me a stapler,
and said you were a shoe, which I took at face value,
so obviously I was insulted. We don't have to go into that again.
Just don't call someone a stapler unless you really mean it.
It's fine to be a shoe, that's all roses and buttered toast,
but a stapler is rat torture, clamping, denailing, branding.
This morning I returned a self-help book to the store.
I bought it to learn how to be sexy.
That's your thing, like how some people are good at Scrabble,
you're good at sex,
and I think I'm good at cleaning dishes.
I don't think I told you this, but a friend of mine died in high school
from a heroine overdose, and I helped her family
clean out her old room. I say old room
since she must have a new room somewhere,
and I found out that she was a doll person like you,
and when I helped clean out her father's study (he offed himself)
I found out he had a lot of self-help books
like me, which is funny because I bet if either of us died tragic
deaths they'd go something like that. I'd spend all my money
then take some pills in a hot bath, and you'd overdose in your childhood bedroom
next to a pink doll house. He collected shoes though, and I don't collect
shoes, but you do, which is why you are a shoe person.
But I think that I am a collector,

because remember how when I was a kid I'd collect toads in a bucket?
So maybe I'm a bucket,
maybe I just take in and let stuff sit inside me
which is why I'm lazy in bed
and better at tasks that require little activity,
and since you're a shoe you can sit in a bucket
and tell me stories while I digest toad bellies
or teach me how to touch myself
until I can make someone say Oh God.

Sitting in Your Bedroom

It's sunny out. No more clouds from
now on. No one is home. The naked man
across the street is finally clothed.

I traffic on through. I can't find a place
in this wide range. I'm only one in the clutter.
An ocean of green. Faces of light in your curtains.

Piebald pigeons in flight. Wings razoring your street.
Where are you right now?

I'm becoming a part of your building.
My face is blue like your bedroom walls.
I'm not crying. It's just the fumes.

Are you in love?
with me?

I'm sinking into the walls like one of those crazy people.
I'm confusing a light world with the dark.
How do we stay?

I'm trying to relax.

What happened to all the lovely things?
I breathe in. It's night now.
Is this what they mean by falling out?

Is sinking backwards into a blue wall
heaven?

I'm on my knees for the night.
Some moon in my chest beating.

My Dream Told Me
I'm Falling out of Love

My imagination is supposed to be pretty able-bodied,
but now it's filled with evaporating pools,
gasping tadpoles.

The meaning was so obvious, get this,
you at a table saying plainly,
"I'm not in love with you. You know that.
I'm in love with Ted."

You proceeded to kiss this Ted
rather plainly as well.

The restaurant wasn't even nice and at the end,
I drank cheap beer while sobbing under a red light.

I quit drinking and now I can hear the grass.
A fellow of mine says she can hear if a banana is ripe,
(any fruit really).

We all have superpowers.
The grass tells me my new haircut makes my jaw too square.
I say I'm okay with that.
I like square jaws and flat chests.
Stubble too.
I like satellites and anything that buzzes

Though most times I don't know how to work it.
I don't know how to work most things.
Sometimes my legs turn into chickens,
and I can't believe I'm alive.
I can't believe I'm balancing.

Old Joe

You put the kettle on.

 You choose four alligator teeth for seasoning.

I dreamed you loved a man named Richard and I cried.

Richard knew nothing about lovemaking or bar soap.

 Richard owned forty pairs of underwear.

I grew my hair long to escape sky rise windows.

 I spit from the 63rd floor and my glob split into seven parts
 before it fell out of eye sight.

That's what we're doing isn't it?

 Except gravity is Time and it's pulverizing us into bits—
 tell me, what's the name of that lake behind the gas station?

The one with the shack across the way?

 The one with the oracle and the algae?

She said Old Joe was killed by a poacher at Wakulla

 because Time loved him too much to do it—

 200 years is a long life for a gator so it must be true.

 How do you woo Time?

 Does it need flowers like the others?

 How do you charm something you can't see?

The Sex Worker

You didn't speak to me today or last night
so I'm sitting at the window with my sad face
and just scared a pair of girl twins to tears.
They had those terrified doll faces that stare from windows,
so I guess they had my face. I am their Papa then.
No, their Mother, or Dah, or Baba, or I'm
their pet alligator that they hid in the toilet and their real Mom
doesn't know a thing, not a thing, not like I do.
If we have a unicorn let's get a sex worker
who blurts prophetic statements mid-cum.
I wrote that to get your attention and you're still not here.
I saw a girl on the street today who looked like you
then I took a picture of a flat building
and remembered how as a kid I liked adults to
touch the arches of my feet. It's not a kink or anything,
though I bet the sex worker wishes it were.
If my imagination were better I could hand her
a cigarette right now or a smoothie.
If the sex worker were here would you come back?
Where did you go anyway?
I told you there's nothing out there but used up cell-phone chargers
and sexy men with their sexy, wavy hair.
I need your hands on my chest and to taste your apple cheeks.
See the whole world has grown hungry,
and the clouds have flown off to different planets.
Our bird is dying.
He's got a broken leg and is flapping around
on the bottom of the cage.
Is all of this through?

**For Most of the Time in the Garden,
I Loved You Wrong**

You caught me in a phase when I thought the moon
was saying something specific, of high importance.
I could almost hear him,
when I sighed, he sighed too, so I sighed often around you.
You thought this meant I was exhausted by you—
do you know how difficult it is to hold two conversations at once,
especially when one person is over 200,000 miles away
and has a problem enunciating?
And as you know, the moon rarely talks anyway.
I dipped my hands into an extinct stream, and you asked me
if I'd taken up miming, and as you stomped away, I heard you
mutter, "wonder how long *this* hobby will last."
Suddenly, the stream I saw was gone and my hands
were covered in dirt. That night you stood behind me
in the shower and nudged my shoulder with your nose, your way
of asking for the shampoo. But we were out.
We were usually out.

Part 3:

Magical and Mundane

towel, F train, mascara, mosaical rod, peanut field, castle, locker, pollen, shrine, cigar box, white sheet, swamp, wing, motorcycle, wolf howl, orange trumpet, fire escape, Mason Dixon line, ship deck, stola, leather ring, pitch fork, laundry detergent, amulet, fossile, space suit, wooden cage, drawbridge, spray can, sword, stapler, chariot, rose petal, fluff, button, red stone, Roman coin, Gates of Hell, uninhabited planet, moonshine, serum, scissors, hydrogen bomb, rainbow aura, blue dust, reed, hot pan, yo-yo, invisible paint, silicone cock, yellow sheets, extinct stream, chalk dust, gold thread, puzzle box, stuffed snake, purple crystal

Reserving Seats for Heroes

If the hero never climbs the tower and the princess
 doesn't have a mirror or long hair,
 and if the moon is rarely full
and if the dragon is not smarter than the evil king,
 and if the peasants like being peasants and if
 the sword was not in the stone or at the bottom of the lake
would there be porridge for everyone on those cold nights
 when the wolf is not hungry, but would rather stay under the bridge
 with the trolls playing cards?

Or would the guards station the guillotine in the public square
 every morning and collect heads in a basket to pass around
 at the evil king's extravagant parties after the nobility
snort coke and would there be coke? Or would their drug
 be of dwarven origin from the mines under a great mountain
 that used to be riddled with elves until the volcano erupted
and burned them with the dinosaurs covering them in molten ash?

Would museums be filled with elf skeletons now?
 Would there be museums or just holy sites where the good flock
 every year on their bellies to mourn some great elvish prophet
who spoke of heroes and good deeds, but who was actually
 a drunk with perpetual wine lips? And if the heroes are gone

were they abducted by an alien race
 and maybe they tried to escape for a while, but then decided that life is easier
 in captivity because food and warmth are provided for
and there aren't enough space suits for evil kings?

Would we reserve seats for them at our tables?

Would we place candles in our windows or would we try to climb
towers on our own? What would our mothers say?

Would they become the evil queen? Would the sky change its color?

How would we remember them right at that moment when the sky
turns dark and we lost everything including our moss covered
hut by the spring, and all the children are in wooden cages
dancing mad dances for mad kings?

Elba, Alabama

I

Barbaric, not wild, lush kudzu hanging like green beards
from white windowsills. Fatback in the yard, pigtail between
your teeth, a little “Miss” in the garden touching leaves.
When did I last see you? The last time you wore your hair curled,
I think. I don’t remember what you said. Last night I dreamed
of catfish, teaching a girl how to bait for bass.
I wore Huckleberry pants rolled and a cane pole, gummy worms
dropped from the sky. Now that I’m older I roll cigarettes at
the depot, wish the depot were open,
wish for those cotton bales my ancestors hid behind.

II

Elves live here, hide behind gravestones,
conduits of red clay and sun, of war bones.
Forget the battle-axe and grab your Hawken.
The Cooper’s hawk the lowest of birds, tearing through
woodlands, sparking coyote envy. How can they snatch
the smallest song birds, pop bellies,
talon past feathers in flight?

III

Pentagram in the jailhouse.
Elba has witches like any other village.
The Pea River floods over when the children
break loose from the oven.
All the townspeople know this.
How Elba is for Napoleon is for Tupelo honey
in the gator’s mouth.

IV

The pebbles were crying in the stream,
the day Grandmother was eight
and swimming from the attic
to the top of a hill thinking Noah couldn't
have survived the flood unless riding on the back
of a giraffe. She didn't care so much
for the lost buildings as for what was
swimming beneath her feet.

V

I'm running down Armadillo Run.
I'm running out of breath.
The stars and the peanut fields of Alabama.
The smooth sailing coastal waters,
easy as chitlins in your mouth.
I've always wanted a Yankee to love.
I've always wanted to explain Spanish Moss.
Even gators hear helicopters.
I tell how Grandfather Wise was buried deeper than the rest.
How that cabin across the school
was my great-great grandfather's.
How he was so afraid of death
they put a window in his coffin,
then stashed him in the attic for a good long while.

VI

There are places where magic hides
under the roots.
Contagionless stars, clear, black and yellow sunrise.
I speak of nature not for place.
I mean hands gripping sugar cane,

peeling back the excess with a knife
for that sweet essence of place that lies past the pine
and the field mouse, that's in
the deer's stare.

VII

I'm not a type of stillness.
I spend the extra gas for Florida waters.
I see oysters in my eyelids.
I caught a crab once and named him "Food"
I caught in him ocean stillness,
an eye that had seen sharks,
wreckage, moments of clarity in clouded salt.
I found I'm not a hunter.
He stays with me.
I've heard this sensation called a "ghost."

VIII

I wish I could say I've tried moonshine or tipped a cow.
My body is claiming oxygen. I need sleep.
What animal did I see last night?
I'm standing by the gully and only see red.
I'm looking for the type of bones that tell the future.
The type you throw into the dirt, and a mirror that can see
into the past, a serum.
I couldn't tell you which leaves tinged black.
Remember, you made me, and my home is in my mouth,
under my tongue, behind my teeth for years now.

When Talking to You

I don't know the words.

So I start by misting my mouth with water, and my shins shake.
I'm sweating butter in a hot pan in the snow.
I'm in Massachusetts.

You're far away.

I don't know where.
Maybe shopping for shoes or loitering on a branch
overlooking the highway with a spray can in your hand
daring yourself to jump.

I think I'm King and whistle.

I wish a bobcat would witness this.
When you call, my teeth turn to jelly.
I like the taste.

I'd pack some in a jar and send it to you,
but you haven't told me your address
or you did or I've visited but I forgot.
I'm out of post it notes.

I sound better next to you.

You said consider yourself wings and three stars for a belt.
I can't place you.
I'm making vowels in my gut.

Remember, I never knew the ground.

I keep a yoyo in my chest.
Sometimes you take it out,
and I remember my name.

It's like solving invisible paint.

Roughly equivalent to oblique,
this machine doesn't translate.

**Says the King
to the Fool**

Honestly, this takes a toll,
this fat tumor on my forehead
is similar to your fat tumor
but mine can speak,
and all he speaks is rude things.
He wants to change the entire world.
He doesn't want to do it through song.
He's always talking about the revolution
and cutting into our kisses.
He's all about complicating
the expected. "Everything's in layers,"
I tell him "like an onion"
and he says,
"always like an onion
why not
a honeycomb?"

Burials

I

I'm speaking to five girls at once.

One of them has the prettiest picture,
but the least traditional beauty.

There's a world in the air that can't be touched.

There are messages not written on paper.
All the passenger pigeons are cooped up
on an island, thrilled to be alone.

They speak of easier days when men

killed each other with swords and ate
potato leek soup, red meat, red wine, hunks
of bread and cheese.

Yesterday a plane fell from the sky.

No one knew the incantations.
No one knew which robes to wear.

We drew the circles all wrong and forgot the language.

We didn't know who to bury, the parts of the plane or
the parts of the body.

II

If there's ash in our future let's burn down the house now.

You'll think this one's sad, but it's the time
of bobcats and that's when the world's sad.

That's when the future is at it's reddest,
and the swamps in the fairy tales are filled with dead unicorns.

Even the dragons are dead.

No one rules the kingdom. The kings are asleep at their desks.

In the morning, we'll take off our clothes
and grow wings. I choose gold. We'll ricochet into our lives

and forget the burials where one arrow
wasn't enough to set the body on fire.

The Cunning Man

I rolled my dog's hair into a tight ball and threw it to the birds.
Right when it hit the ground your head popped out—
a new born glistening wet with red.

Red is your favorite color so you must have come from the sun.
You've seen one or two chariot races and know the diplomacy of the gods,
which is why you tend to get what you want
without others knowing they're giving it to you.

I was born from a chicken egg in a coop in Alabama when it was misting out.
That means I rarely cry. I don't know about chariot races
but I've seen a séance and a witch eating rose petals to keep the bad away.
I eat rose petals every night before bed.
Sometimes you find them in my sheets
and think I'm being romantic,

but really I'm afraid I have a heart condition.
I counted fifty-four sharp stabs today. In the same place each time.
I can't tell if it's in my back or my chest or cancer
or if the green outside is actually purple,
if colors have anything to do with the future.

Once I saw my mother cry and smoke a cigarette at the same time.
Menthol, the basement air congested.
She gripped a purple crystal and rocked back and forth.
I thought, this must be an exorcism
and grabbed a King James.

She was born at four in the morning during a half moon.
All those children come with crystals.
The parents back then didn't know what to do.
Now we know to refrain from cutting the umbilical cord

until the sun is out then to place the crystal under our tongue
until it melts and then we can touch the dead.

Standing at the Gulley's Edge

“We’re above the Mason Dixon line so can we kiss now?” you ask.

We’re north and safe.

We see cold as safe.

Hard packed snow and
ice safe, safe.

“Where are you going,” I squeak.

I’m the size of a mouse.

I’m pocket-sized and easy that way.

“If you kiss me, I’ll show you something,” you say.

I lean forward,
and you take off your shirt.

“Look,” you say,
osprey feathers grow from your armpits.

“I thought you wanted a kiss,” I say.

“Maybe tomorrow,” you say.
then jump from the ledge.
Your feathers hold you up
for a second,
maybe a minute
before you plummet.

A lone coyote licks up your muck.

I rise to the podium:

“Ladies and gentlemen, The First Lady!”

The audience cheers.

A knight on a horse rides by sobbing for you,
his sword hanging limp against the saddle.

All the snow melts, and I scamper off on pine roots.
I stop at the edge of a lake
and sink till a door opens
and suddenly I'm slaying women
on top of a pile of women,
my own sword slick with them.

The Lark

This evening the snake finally bites the king
and you say, "It's like he's determined to feel bad."
I can't give you a floor plan to what's inside.
The light fixtures need some sprucing up and ever since the queen died
the people have been desiccating in the roses
the princess planted before she ran off
into the dark with the centaur.
No, I know. There's never been a centaur. I'm the centaur and you're
the princess. We fell in love when the oracle whispered
dramatically, "*I have never seen such powers.*"
We wrapped our heads together in golden thread
and gave birth to a son, who'll kill us later for the throne,
but that's later, and not now, now we're in our royal chamber
and you're saying to me "It's like he's determined to feel bad."
The trolls wouldn't accept the honey and now we're at war.
They demand complete restructuring of the castle.
They want a moat with alligators, pinnacles, and parapets,
ten drawbridges and swords for all.
No. I'm in bed in Massachusetts and you're whispering
over the phone "It's like you're determined to feel bad."
The trolls are in my chest, see?
It's always in the chest.
These thin white lines in my face are from smiling. I'm not determined.
Talons are raining from the sky. Can you see?
I don't think you can. I think you're on the other side
of the world drinking coffee with people like you.
I'm trying to tell you how I woke up with red in my chest,
and I think it's because I forgot how to touch myself.
I'm fumbling around in the granary with absence.
She's such a hard kisser.
She was like this the other night when you and I
fucked in love and neither of us noticed our heads

bumping into her sweaty thigh. I'm trying to tell you
I'm moving slowly because the knights are moving slow,
somewhere larks fuck in flight.
Every day the king is bitten by snakes,
and you're sitting there stumped on a rock.
Don't turn my chest into a picket sign.
I want to but I'm not. The wizards are convening in my head
for an answer "It's like you're determined to feel bad."
If that's what this is called then hail the dragons
from their caves and let them rule.
No. What I'm saying is that I want to but I'm not.

**I Don't Even Know
What The King of Swords Means**

That's the last thing you said to me
before you hung up and stomped
witchlike to the birdbath.
Witchlike means like a witch.

The first thing you said to me was via handwritten letter—
I've found the stone you've been looking for
You have a kick for dramatics.
Once you stood at the edge of a precipice
and jumped, tangoing the whole way
just to spite the gods.

You created your own set of angry gods.
You make up the rituals, usually they involve
a day old puddle and your girlfriend's spit.

You're a revolutionary in this village.
I think you flirted with me,
you held my hand
and told me the clouds have eyes too.
You're elusive like that.
You're often slinking around corners
coaxing your shadow behind you.

Once you made me herbal tea,
and I woke up with the King of Swords on my forehead.
When I asked if you put him there,
you lied and said a ghost did
then sprinted up to your astronomer's tower
to add more constellations to our starscape.

But I know the truth,
you just wanted to touch me.

Part Four:

Mythological Characters, Etc.

Grandfather Wise, hill-digger, farmer, cowboy, centaur, Tiresias, hero, wizard, ghost, evil king, Dawn, Elizabeth I, vampire, knight, The Squirrel, mummy, princess, Old Joe, The Hobbit, alien, evil queen, goddess, knife swallower, The Historian, witch, peasant, pharaoh, Obsession, Lucky, The Fool, druid, The Explorer, golden prince, The Cunning Man, oracle, mermaid, astronaut, The King

**I Used to Think I Knew
about Communication**

until I saw your hair stuck to the bottom of my water bottle
and thought it was you leaving me.
I wear blue boxers
because I was a boy last night
when I showed you how small I am.
Now I'm in the shower unscrewing the drain.
The water
slides into black going no where.
Blue grime rubs easily off the metal plate.
Outside it's morning and the leaves are strong.
You're in bed
under a white blanket.
On the table beside you a railroad spike
I tore from the ground to keep some rust filled
with cotton and men
making deals in hotel bars.
Last night I was the only man in the tribe
who knew the recipe. My dream sister died.
It was horrible.
Her head on a spike, black hair stuck
to her bloody cheeks. I kissed the mouth
mother hated. I walked in the air then built a shrine
for the Obamas,
sloppily laying cement missing Sister.
I turned into King and my people hated me.
A hooded man tore my back with rose thorns.
Blood spritzed
from little geysers, and I swam in the Nile,
a golden prince, my mascara running with salt water
and the crocs sleeping on the bank
well fed

on my people. Above your head there's a bookend
shaped like an owl. Lighter fluid drips onto the bedside table.
Is one of my eyes bigger than the other?
I cleared out
this dresser for you.
Is this what burning feels like?
There are photographs I don't want developed.
I keep them
in cigar boxes decorated with beautiful women
sitting on park benches with pastel parasols, the men
with their leather shoes bright as nickels
and all that love they feel
right there in that peck on the cheek.
That was love in 1924 says the box.
Love in 2014 is you without tattoos under white sheets.
In your head a spilled glass, whiskey
soaking the carpet.
How does this work?
I'm in the shower trying
to use the drain as a strainer.

**I Made This Beginning
a Long Time Ago**

when I learned the art of deciphering hats.
I call myself Seeker. Investigator.
I practice my bewildered look so when I discover
an ancient shrine I'll have the appropriate reaction.
But I yelled so loud when you opened the antechamber.
You didn't know what was in there, but I knew.
You found the thrones I built for us.
Saw how they were covered in poisonous fungi.
The robbers had destroyed
the mummies and their wrappings.
The breasts of the women were gone.
Their jewels lay there against the ribcage, easy pickings.
We rested at the shrine door, staring.
I smoothed out an apology,
and we touched the soft tissue under the linen.
There were only a few beautiful objects left.
I rubbed your shoulder blades
as we dried them in the sun.

Whistling

The living room smells like leeks and hot water.

I want you in the shower with suds, steam
rising off tiles.

I give you two answers in one because if you write it
in a journal I don't want my voice too loud.

My hands are full of pebbles from under the oven.

I think a stream used to run through here.

I'm sorry for talking out of loneliness.

All the worst things are said at this time of night.

Like the other night, when our mouths were thin pink veins
whistling hurt. Our sounds are still fluttering

in the room. I breathe in their molt

and dip my feet into an extinct stream.

Sometimes it rains talons, and I miss you more.

I found an old shed under the sink

and when it's dark I light a rusted lantern.

I sleep in a cot and decipher what you said.

I write what you said on the walls and draw a lot of lines.

I stay in the reeds creating artifacts

from the material of your absence,

something similar to your spirit, your sound.

**I Have Now Stalked
the Entirety of the World**

The continent of You In A Black Dress
grew delicious bananas.
I swam in those lakes longer than I should've.
I came out with yellow hair
and sea weed slivers in my toe nails,
a weird rasp in my throat. Horny.

You With Him is another place
filled with ruins and masks.
I slid down a ladder and found the darkest hole,
no snakes in there, no nothing, just the darkest dark
and his ghost voice whispering,
“Did you make coffee?”

The inhabitants of The Land Of Blonde
were avid smilers.
I archeologized them out of their graves
and set them around a dining room table.
They acted as normal
skeletons, which was surprising
since they were smiling.
I thought they had to be alive.

The Mustache Peoples were city dwellers
and filled with love.
They spent time on the beach
but mostly they were in bed.
I saw this in pictures and traversed their city.
It was the size of a cramped, one-bedroom apartment.

At the end of my travels,

I found you eating an apple,
 hugging a branch at the peak of a large oak.
I climbed up there and told you
 the tales of The Purple Shirt:
 Across The Atlantic and Africa.
You weren't impressed. I was envious.
 I had fallen in love with mountains that were yours.
 Every land was past the point of invasion.
 I saved bits of dirt, bits of bone in my pocket.
Grave digger, body snatcher, illusions, that's all.

The Catacombs

I positioned the picnic basket right beneath
the water-owl-horned-snake-god character.
The one you love so much?
You said, "He roams you know, sees the theories
a bookworm only thinks. Like mating rituals."
The hieroglyph meant 'bolted door'
when you read the stones wrong
and said the sphinxes were from Memphis, TN.
I got the sweet satisfaction of telling you
you were wrong. We found a mummy
covered in a few black rags.
Above him a picture of a man running
in the Nile with nothing on, not even a hat.
Did it mean mania? I sang to calm myself.
You touched his cheek,
said he must have come from the 1st Dynasty
when reeds against ankles were a fetish,
when Hathor was created by an old woman
who asked the priests to embalm her pet bull,
put on a noble's funeral. "The first holy beast," you said,
"then came the crocodile and the ram
the cat and finally the lotus flower.
We've been marrying animals for ages," you said
That was when pyramids were in abundance,
and we hadn't learned much about the real colors,
when all the wall paintings were rich
and every sarcophagi's dedication had something to do with us.

Nebuchadnezzar's Diary

I've been looking out the window for months now
to get an idea of the weather. All I see is dark.

The other day you jumped into the abyss,
and I didn't follow you.

I'm tired of abysses and fat,
black voids with gaping mouths.

I know that heroes are supposed to jump through flames.
I haven't been a hero for some time.

I've been an archeologist
with a passion for cloud formations.

My beard is long, and I've taken up whistling.

I saw you fall into the darkness, and your silhouette
became smaller and smaller
until you were a thin, white line.

I asked myself, "What should I do?"

I asked the tenuous clouds and the strained ones.

The ones with sharply defined edges.

The ringed clouds. I asked the water.

When I could no longer see you,

I stopped asking and grew my beard even longer.

I found Nebuchadnezzar's diary in the clay today.

He wrote, "The end is just the king of lies."

Says the King

I

Half the time I dream about the body,
the other half I'm in bed in ecstasy
with you. You can't tell the difference
between my two-ness.
This is another symptom
of the body.

I will trade this for that. I am revising.
Give me my time, any building should be built
leisurely. A slow step to the side
is most important.

The shared custody of my breast.

See how the nipple hardens
when the fan turns on.

II

"What do we got?" the electrician asks.
All these faulty plugs.

If I could play with wires
the way he plays with wires,
I'd be set. All I need is a little income.
A little egg to sit on.
Thick framed glasses like his
as in I-know-what-I-am-doing-
I've-been-this-way-since-I-was-born.

III

I didn't help the woman find her cat
because I wasn't wearing a binder.

A doctor once said
breasts over a size B
are "pendulum like."

Screw the cat.

I'll swing by myself.

The way they move
so scary.

"Arachnophobia: brought on by
fear of erratic movements."

Unpredictable limbs.

IV

Today I'll dirty myself.
I'll face my daughter and son
and not choose.
I'll flatten the back of my head
on a board. I'll be pharaoh over king.
This means everything. The likeness
between a rose and a lily. Mascara
on a pale hairy face. I'd rather
float down a river than be a mountain.
Generally, I'm opposed to stagnation,
as in unmoving, brackish.
Decorate the mummy, I say.