

THE STARS ON THE 7:18 TO PENN



Ana Božičević

The background of the image is a blurred interior of a train car. It shows rows of seats with a patterned fabric, likely green and white. The motion blur is horizontal, suggesting the train is moving quickly. The lighting is somewhat dim, with a yellowish tint from overhead lights.

SOME OCCURRENCES ON THE 7:18 TO PENN

*All I can say to those I meet: "Try and make it to Cold Mountain."
- Han-Shan*

i.

He showed me this book called “Discovering God.” And guys?
I nearly did choke on the swanning spray of insufferable light—



“Some people can only take seconds
of God’s voice,” he said. But for me
it was, like, the rubbery-awake I get after a slap,

or (not that I did that in a while) after I
write a poem, then open the window

to the naval dawn air.

I see a hawk being chased by sparrows.

And I won’t ever again write simply again

‘cause I won’t ever feel
the simplicity of an again bloodthirsty
sparrow.

ii.

The guy with the book is gone. Above his seat
there's a sad mousetailed triangle of mist. &

gently, out of it you step—

like a kid with Down's down a Sunday staircase
and into the golden dinette where her eggs are waiting.

O touch my forehead. Tell me
it's OK not to be modern.

Or say shit like: "Newsflash! En route to manger
shepherds with canes mistaken for fighters
are shot dead by our boys!" My little

pony, sparrows'r'us, O Philomel, can we sing "clouds" now

like back when the beautiful was beautiful? Please please sing of the shepherds:

"Theirs was a love too perfect." Ergo, it had to flunk.

And it was shapely to lose all my stuff.

The wallpaper, care bears, the morning star

and the rose of the sea and the rose of the wind. The stuff
I began from. The wooden horse.

A see-saw in the spray of light.

iii.

Always the beast has a remote heart.

'Cross seven seas, beyond two hills as two
Lambs facing each other, in a meadow fine as my lady's kerchief, a boar

Grazes:

Inside this boar's a hound.

Inside the hound a rabbit.

Inside the rabbit a grey dove.

Inside the dove

At the end of poetry the poem can no longer be remote

iv.

I love jewels. Don't you just love jewels?
(Oh good, you're my kind. She-assassin of light.)

And wouldn't it be cool if Bloomberg was Prez?
Or wait, I know: Trump! (It would be

awesome. Now spit out those feathers—)
Rid your mouth of the sorrowing of the sparrows

I tell you as a friend. In middle school already I knew I couldn't love
light.

The furry kind. It plowed through unwashed
hydrangea windows & onto where grandma sat in a soiled frock

on sofa-as-dust-compressed, and leafed through a creased
farmer's almanac— was that

light's work? She was stuff, spat out into my palm and shrieking, glazed
A turkey glazed with loss—

Ok. Put her back then.
Do it for the men.

Rain falling on ice My hatred of jewels.

Some thing's preciousness over something else

V.

And the stars go:

THINGS ARE NOT LOOKING GOOD FOR US
MOLESTED BY HAIRCUTS ON LAW AND ORDER AND WHATS GONE WRONG
WITH THE SKYLINE, WHY,
INSTEAD OF READING A BOOK YOU READ STAR OR THE TOOTHPASTE,
LOST IN AN ANCIENT ALMANAC

ANNE CARSON IN HEAVEN NERVOUS DESPERATE STUDENT
HER WINDBREAKER FILTHY CLUTCHING THE TRAIN SEAT SO TIGHT WE
SAW HER WRISTPULSE IT WAS
LIKE SEEING HER HEART IN COUNTDOWN

ITS NIGHT. THE ELEPHANT OF POETRY

WE MIGHT BE ON AN INVISIBLE PLANK
ABOVE THE DARKNESS AND IT MIGHT BE
A BLESSING, ANNE WHATS THE WORD FOR

BRANCHES DUMPING THEIR SHINE ON YOUR HEAD, WE THINK OF IT EVERY
TIME WE SEE A BOX. HER NECKS SHADOW

TRANSLUCENT, SHE TURNS TO...
NOTHING TO LOVE: CHEEK CLOUDS, EYEBROW NIGHT

WHAT PASSES FOR EUROPE
BOMBS. JUST LIKE US, PASSING FOR LIGHT

vi.

I was riding the train but really when I closed my eyes I saw that
I stood still in the valley's center. And the guy said:

You can make the valley echo for you like a music hall.
It was tried once by Fitzcarraldo. So I sang long long
five short and one long down. And my voice

connected the various peaks crowding the valley. It was so sweet I
teared up like a sentimental father. But really this is

the same father that hit his son. So I
opened my eyes. The train was moving.
I thought to the words of the valley song:

it said that the child must sing again. I was the child. And inside the jaded
stars was a child. And the soldiers were all children, infinitely valuable.

The shepherds they killed were children.
Their poetry was infinitely valuable.
The poetry of steering by a star— and then the guy said:

You just have to relax a little bit
and go on connecting the valley

Oh Mary you're as beautiful as disbanded armies.

vii.

You had been my close secret
and then you deprived me of your furriness.
The secret was hetero, it was inhuman

and what is left after it
is a little less like the Chrysler building.
The metal and the tremor.

It's unlikely you remember the air
awhirl thick and green like a grasshopper's thigh
or the waiting. When you next leave a person

in the warm brown mud – beware the eggs
hatched there. Lives, damned lives –
the eggs will expose you,

horse made of cut.

viii.

The role of Guy was played by the angel.
The role of You was in turns played by the spirit, the chick
on the train, one other guy I knew, and by
the woman I wake beside, who's played by a lioness,
and the absence of her by darkness
and death. There's no nicer way to put it.
Darkness and death. In the restaurant, she
was a focus on fire. I minced toward her like Heracles mutton,
and oh lioness I daren't ask you if
you feel it too, the howling smell of linden when we kiss, & the meridians
spinning and lolling round the mechanic globe
that hangs like a cherry in darkness— in other words, do you feel me as your last.
It's like asking snow if white is a color:
or the blush in the stem of a calla, that whispers,
I'm your reflection, I'm ashamed... Or like geese and gratitude.
You put a goose into your yard, you give it feed, but still it's
just one of a pair, the one that doesn't hold the meaning. Why
so serious? This is where my lack of love of light
has brought me. The cherry sinks in the mud—
the unibody earth, thick like mole, and out of it
our heads do pop into a sparkle-scrubbed May. My lioness, we're free.
To grow out of the darkness of boar-hide into
Don't say it. Why not? Because if we're shepherdesses
of the boar-heart of poetry we'll be shot down? No,
you silly goose.

Because you can't touch cloud.
What you want to say is cloud.

Peak light on the mountain.

THE STARS THAT COME BEFORE THE NIGHT



i.

Out of the body of the dead dachshund A mountain of luxury. Asleep in its branches was luxury, badgers born blind into luxury – their crying was luxury, above all luxuries. But Love was usury. It counted the pennies of the person, chanted Dog in the yard where now there was no dog. It waited, then jumped and wrenched: What did you do with the pennies of his person?! — Violent stillness. I looked and saw Love had ossified, a root, straight into the ground. I could hear a brook gurgling. Badgers burrowing. This was no place for politics. Clouds skated overhead. Then mountain crooned out: –There's a root growin next to my root, so close. There's a root fixin to strangle my root, But worm and water, it feels like embracin And I need me some embracin, And tho you smell like sadness, and that's same as money, I'll take it from you now, wipe from it the finance And leave only luxury. The Dog, he knew such luxury. He knew grass and sun were luxury. He died of luxury, in the lap of luxury

ii.

Ever let something go
then watch it from afar?

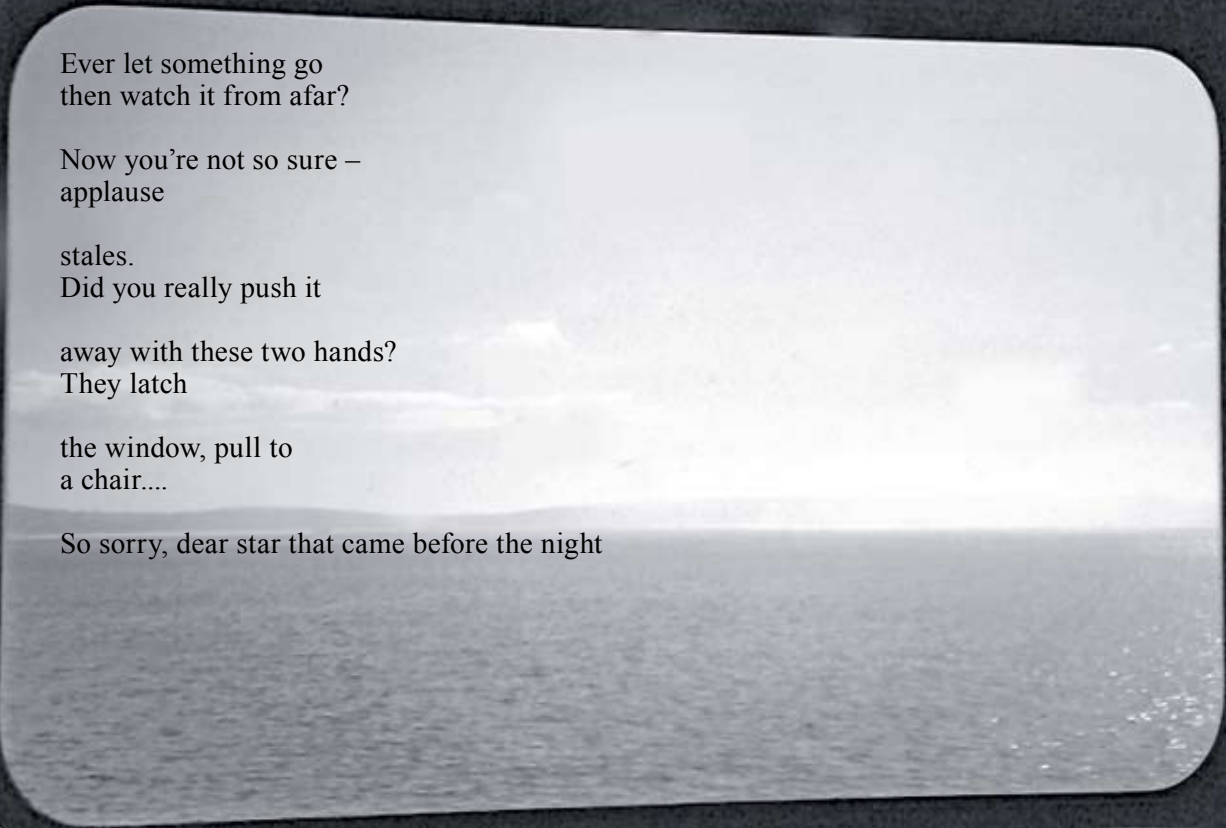
Now you're not so sure –
applause

stales.
Did you really push it

away with these two hands?
They latch

the window, pull to
a chair....

So sorry, dear star that came before the night



iii.

Sunset was applause. We lived in the nail castle, summered at laundry palace. Round glittered dear carpetworld – at sweet hollow diner by waterfront chiropractors you were adventureland, an edible arrangement. Now I work at men's warehouse, sleep in home depot. I bump into you at melting pot or pizza hut. And it's almost nothing, the thing more than one dollar – an indoor lumberyard. Sunset's just a flavor.



iv.

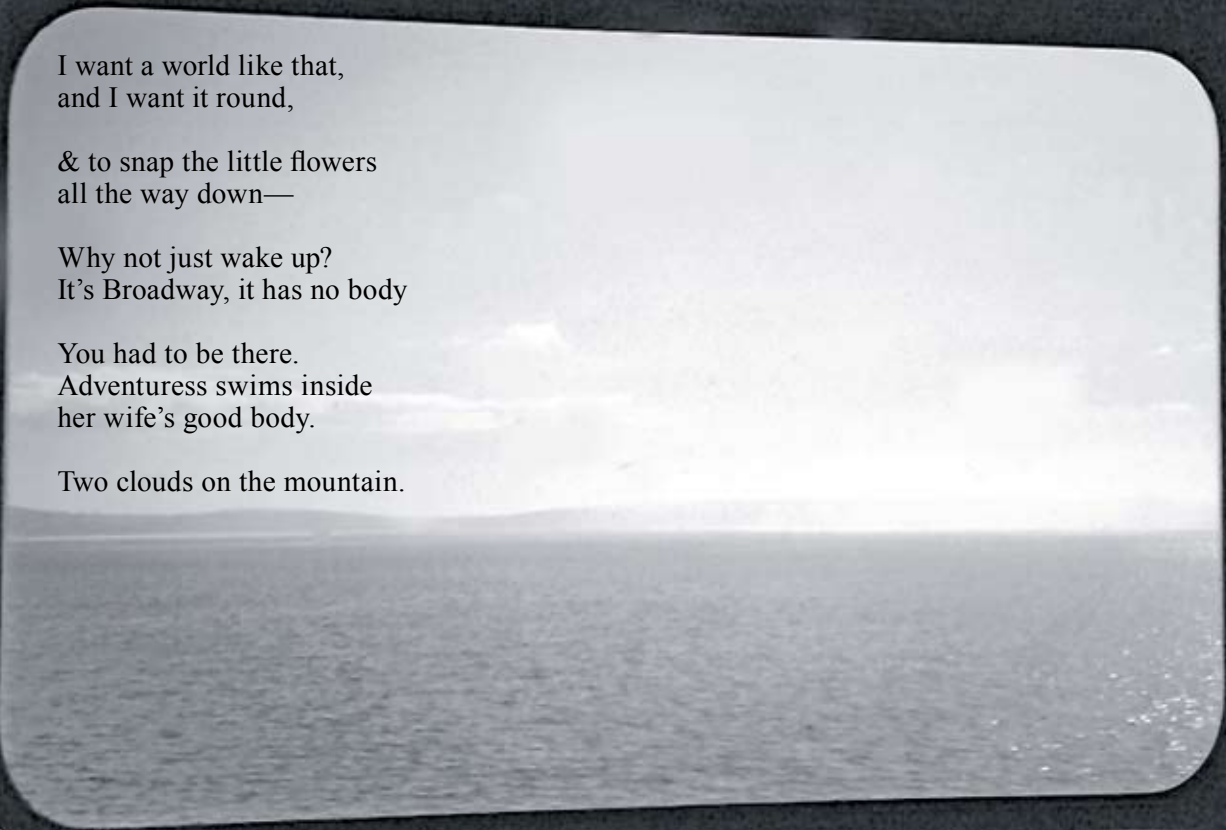
I want a world like that,
and I want it round,

& to snap the little flowers
all the way down—

Why not just wake up?
It's Broadway, it has no body

You had to be there.
Adventuress swims inside
her wife's good body.

Two clouds on the mountain.



V.

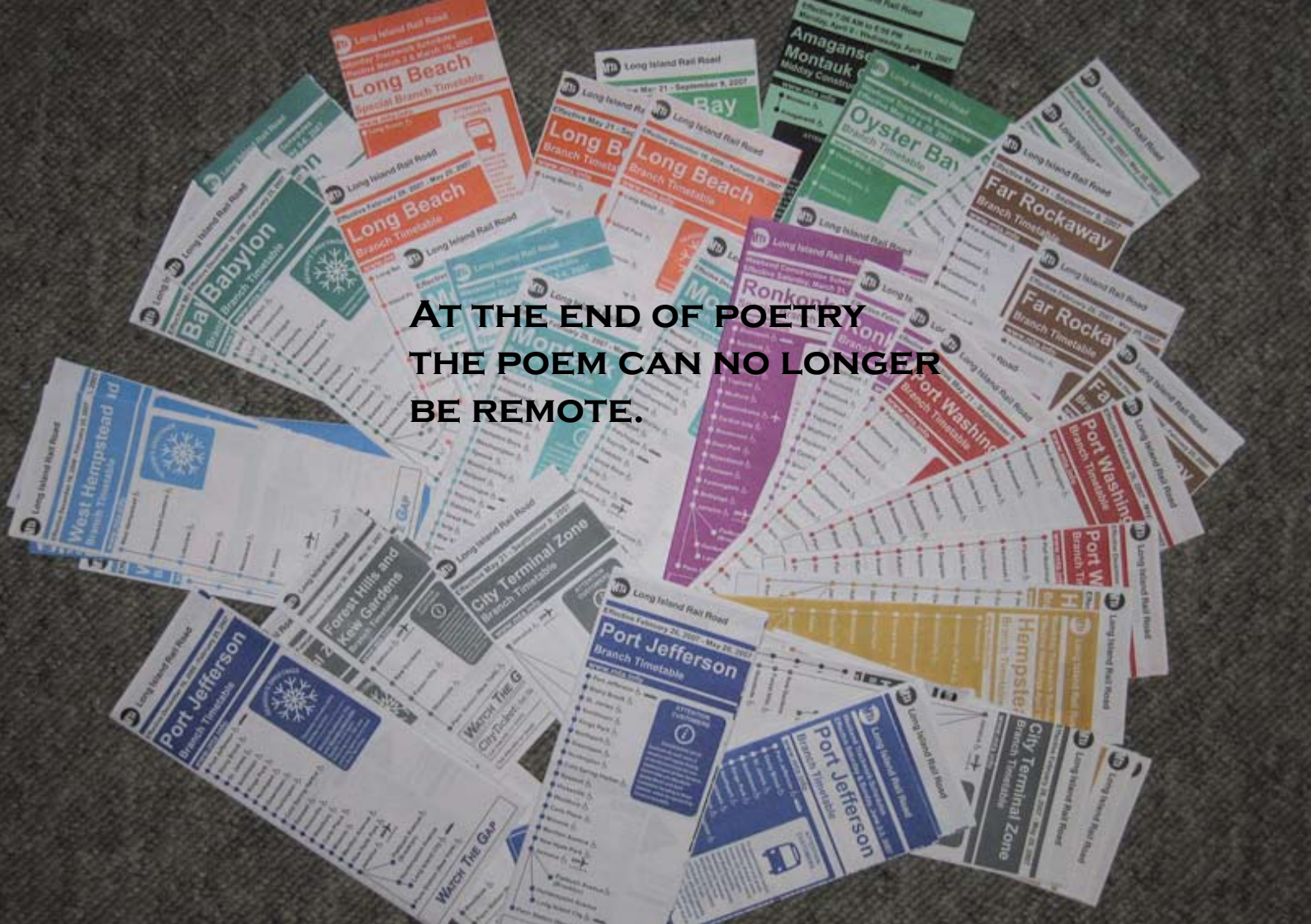
The trees just got more treeey, voices under the bed purred out – she made contact. Now she would do everything opposite (and even “Take Me to the Riot” sounds like shit!) – no more Dead dachshund and I’d like to join him, or My girlfriend thinks I’m fat – she’ll dip under, not with important-sounding speech but the importance of speech, then...then...fuck. She asks the test question. Nothing. A false positive, I guess.

vi.

If the sign on the door signals to the passer-by that the store is OPEN, does the other side of the sign tell those inside the store that the world is CLOSED? Close up shop, put world back in business. This poem is called The Mystery of Commerce.

vii.

Sadness plus finance equals luxury. Commerce plus treetops is travel. What then of the mountain? Once upon a time, in a far off land, there lived kindly king Louis Vuitton the Third. For a summer job he worked at the dairy barn on Broadway, and there, quite by accident, he fell in love. Twice a day the dachshund would drive by inside an object, and ask for a pretzel. The feeling he would get puzzled king Vuitton: it poked, like a stone in the shoe. Finally he asked him out and closed shop. It was night. He put his heart in nightcare and walked to the diner. They both showed up for the date dressed like wives. It was something to laugh about. They laughed for many months, then...fuck. Something was wrong. King looked and saw dachshund had ossified, and when he walked around the still body, it was just a front, with a stick from behind. Where was Dog? King tore his stole in sadness and started walking. Those who met him laughed at him: all he would say was, try to make it where I'm going. After some time the mountain began to loom. It loomed first through his dreams: just a mountaintop here and there, spinning. Then leaves would scatter on the road. The clouds raced together to form a pretzel. It pointed to something dirty. The joke was some thing to laugh about – almost nothing, but he knew he made contact – like two flavors perfect together, the indoor palace everyone talked about Each little thing a luxury good Or the star he had read of, that shines in the sunset: A root. His status as leaf



**AT THE END OF POETRY
THE POEM CAN NO LONGER
BE REMOTE.**

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quoileternite.blogspot.com

first edition January 2009
published by ellectriquepress.com
as part of the 3rd dusi/e-chap kollektiv.
image of seats © 2008 Lorie Trancho-Robie

Acknowledgements

Parts i.-vi. of *Some Occurrences on the 7:18 to Penn* have appeared in *typo*; parts vii. and viii. have appeared in *fou*. The title *The Stars that Come Before the Night* is via Lytton Smith's *The Anvil That Comes Before Your Civilisation* via Carey McHugh's *The Lynx That Comes Just Before Our Grief*.

Thanks to, and for Amy King.
Thanks to Sam Starkweather for the hawk and the sparrows, and the mountain.



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