

GLITCH

**POEMS IN THIS MANUSCRIPT HAVE APPEARED,
SOMETIMES IN DIFFERENT VERSIONS, IN XAN-
TIPPE, BOSTON REVIEW AND NEAR SOUTH.**

GLITCH



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We built the beast, then lived in its gut
with eyes that evolved bat-like, so when

a hack atrophied our city, we were
ready. Pioneering women hung

flags with LEDs that swished on powerlines
we could see from our googles.

We wandered in and out of each other's
houses because notions of family got called off.

The bytes left behind passed as currency, Giga and nano cents.
In the hopes of a fiscal rapture, we slogged through data,

some of us rising up the graph, most dissolving to deficit,
and even years into it, revision seemed unlikely,

especially when someone remembered we'd all left
the lights on, a gesture which broke the backs

of the best families. And no one let the cat
out of the mail room. A devastating oversight.

OPACITY

So surrounded by disaster I've forgotten how to make a myth. Any suggestions?

Like a cliff, but maybe not so hollowsounding. You've got a giant book that wags its finger at you and it's an impulse center too. Gets sexy when grandiose. Example: I was never good with money because it swallows children so you say appetite's a sin.

The last plant on earth: fig or fern?

I've got little pieces left and build a collage sculpture of history. Some are from your little socialist magazine, the one with the drowned bird on the cover. Some are from my high school yearbook. That's how I invent the end for myself. Ultimately, we haven't learned what nothing would look like. We make it ginormous and heavy-handed, even painterly. So, fern, of course, because of how light looks through its fingers, because it can make so many different shadows.

Who is the Real G_____?

I'm a nameless, and also, a sun from behind. I use spit as adhesive. I live like the infants know better. I'd like to see us rise up with them, but I don't win on every

issue. I'm a historical hydra. An unrepentant cephalopod in a rootless nation.

But, I'm also urgency because of dying. I try to be heady and fail or so they tell me, the science ones and the philosophy ones and the theosophy ones. I let them live in my head so they feel better about their twittering. And I breathe and that's a rattle.

Your childhood nickname:

Pink Holy.

Your book says:

When impossibly grim--
our very best urges
will remake the epoch.
We'll stagger
under our own ruthless mass.

But, as you know, all a book owns wouldn't fill your smallest coin pocket.

EXPLICATION

Here I tell you that everything ends and that when signs
die we bury them. The you is still you.

Then I deny what I mean because I know better.
You take it out of context here, say it seems like it's love
but it's waterproof and gold and lives in your house,

so I hide in a clown face.
Everybody watches a girl in a clown face.

I play some music:
. . . the contortionist writes island poems,
the contortionist lives inland . . .

AFTERSHOCK

Low-flying planes rattle my Dutch oven.
The flat trembles and the resultant
burn from the stove on the whorl of my finger,
my loyalty brand. I'd bother my neighbor for a salve
but through the grate I hear her putting her son to bed.
She begins a story with hoods and helicopters.
The canisters of smoke spell trouble for the hero.
Snatched up from the street, the hero is spirited away
and his body divided. Or perhaps as variation,

our hero evades his captors and clammers up
an embassy and tonight her son will fall asleep
with the comfort of refuge, jeweled facet of a broken window,
but it's hard to hear through the radiator's clatter,
the shrieking from down the hall. She might not end it at all.

I unwrap the parcel hidden beneath my floorboards, my secret
typewriter and its cockroachiness. The keys
were once shellacked in black so we wouldn't find the letters.
I feel for the outline of their shape in the paint
like I'm blind, like I'm remaking its making.
The poem begins: *I camt gey my tirlor grp of thi grond. someine knos.*
I'd carried the line in my heart for months. I wrote it
on a pebble lost in the commotion of our progress.

THE WALK

Like a wino I trolled the streets
in search of an elixir for my
melancholy. A Virgo with gold
teeth lured me into his lap
and sang songs about the fraudulent
landscape. *The purple sky
is invented for you. The purple
sky is not among us.* When his hand
traveled south, I blushed.

I left when tomorrow made sense.
That's the way a walk renews.
One makes her way through
the imperfect city. One discovers
how the world is people
with hand puppets. People shivering
metal sheets for thunder.
Then one squints her eyes
to fuzz it more, to prettify.

YOU DEMOLISH WITH VISCERA

Cherubs hover like gnats, *groan*,
so predictable,
thus resisting on principle is everything to me.
Tough luck your eyes are more permeable
than *America's Next Top Model*.
You're the black paint on my window,
every minute between me and the next bus.
You're chairs being lampposts with flattering light
Quantum physics.
Also your breath reaches my lungs
like the flutter of a typhoon-making butterfly.
The improbable third ear. The wrinkled corners of your eyes.
The consequence of leaning up on an elbow for the imprint
of your face on my gloppy retina.

SPOOKY ACTION AT A DISTANCE

I.

I'm thirty-nine years and earn my living through ransom and I'm proud because people rely on my discretion. I remember that day, swimming with my sister who wore a blue suit that slid off her shoulders. It was erotic for others but not for me. But all this to tell the part that lines the outside. I was far away. I heard the release of birds, the part that most forget because the birds made such a small sound. But it's true. They fled silently. I don't speak freely to Feds, but you seem like a fair person. You seem like you might not judge a thief. So my sister's suit; it slipped and I saw. The birds behind her head.

2.

I am a freshman at Jurassic Edification High. I study Dial-In and Fetish Dancing. That day I cut school because my mother encourages me to let go of things. I had stopped taking long walks on the frontage road. I stopped looking for my resemblance to the Constellation of Princesses. I just sang and practiced dance routines with my best friend Eileen who is mean but nice. We were at the lake when the light behind Eileen flickered. Like a blackout, but more important. She was eating a veggie wrap, but we left it on the stone.

3.

I've been bought here against my will.

4.

My son, or his element emerged that day and in a grog I waited next to his littleness. Sweet love. My partner had gone for water. I was alone with the nurse who tended to my baby's tiny. I noticed a wash of blood along the edge of his head. I was silent and sore. The hospital rattled with air conditioning. And then something else. The rattling became clavé. The nurse raised his eyebrows but said nothing *like he expected it*. My partner came back and his eyes were glazed with dust. We forgot the boy.

5.

The sudden rush of a dozen men. The sudden hush of a modern hen.
The ghastly scowl of a pathogen. The Two Live Crew in Atherton.

6.

The guy I worked with had a heart condition so we had to be really careful. It was Sunday afternoon and we were behind the counter and then he grabbed his chest. Like a heart attack. I helped him lay down on the ground and then I picked up the phone but it was just a dead line with a really scary nothing.

7.

Listen. Carefully. I was in the crowd that was closest. Earlier at an appointment, I noticed my surgeon had had dirt under his nails and I imagined him leaving behind some goddamned microbe of a mess inside of me, so I wasn't really there *there*. But the one on stage had a soft clay face. Someone threw a tomato and he caught it with his left hand. If it had been a different time, I might have fallen in love. Or maybe I did and that's why I'm here. So he said some thing about breaking down the pieces into smaller pieces and then we were covered in feathers.

8.

I read a few pages to see when we had existed and found reference to the *Assassin Love Story*. The document meant us so I undid the rope and let the balloons loose because it had become a civic affair. On the stage stood a chanteuse that had been dead for ages. I was angry the audience didn't pay. Twelve nickels in my pocket and three had a sullen face. I watched from the booth. The next rope undid the feathers. Soon after the baritone, a faded blonde whispered. On the walk home, I saw change had overtaken the landscape. The greenery was greener although that might have been some other time. Autumn leaves came after me. I saw two dogs making love if that's what you call it. About that, I wouldn't know where to begin. I played cards with the men in my building and won three dollars. My wife was two years dead.

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