



surface tension
a 10 day tryst

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COVER ART: "FULL CIRCLE" DIGITAL MEDIA BY CHRIS CARIGNAN, 2006
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Day One

Postmark

There's a green wash of fog
always when (hearing *always*
as *all ways*)

I look out of my cubicle—
it's 9 am here
in the wake of you

The intersection at 38th & *I recall* (Market)
busy with breeze, standing
after an ovation
directed at

no one in particular.
My mornings, I want to tell you,
begin with the deep breath
of forgetting

and I hold it in until I begin typing
nonsense / mirage (*com 'ere*) / thought
weighs, they weigh
more than both of us

but who am I
to say the sun doesn't
gasp when it flinches / strikes

your skin— it could be roped off by yellow tape
and say what

we've said:

no, go around

go — around

(I know this happens to me)

There is a wind that follows me
home. An intersection huddling
among broken tail lights, windshield
specks of blue.

Then I step diagonally
across the sunlight
into a more perfect
kind of damage.

Green Machine

Gears in daylight crank early, my ears
spring open to his murmurs. Still dark. I hold him,
he devours animals; my eyes break
open. Gold but still black. I am moving unaware, follow
him as if string is still attached.

Now he sleeps and I read you, bright
unfolding on a street corner. Where do I go
when you are walking? What do I say
when you list your slow moments, solo
movements? Your caution

carries a notable frequency, one
that moves small objects in my room.
The corner. The turning. The constant
form of sleep
I miss and missed.

He has no middle moments, no calm
even embraces. "Good night
nobody. Good night mush." I cannot see you

here, spread pages in my hands. You turn
more carefully, like a symbol.
No, like a metaphor, catching teeth in teeth.

Day Two

Heartworm

You would not believe my qualms,
the umbilical patterns and textures.
Startling shriek. Again.

We argue about the dog. He wins. Again
and I leave late. Holding
onto your gesture

of intricate moments helps me slide,
groove into groove, through
the inflammatory day. Who

will be waiting at the end. Who
else can hear that shriek, that yellow
buttoning solid sting

demolishing me. Who gives
their heart to the parasite—the one
who wants it most? Today you were thinking

you'd hear from me. You did not
hear me, the siren and flashing lights
moving past you in traffic.
How could you have known?

Borough

Si – len – t

the thrush of leaves

But also in absence
in (the) stead of
appearance

I heard the crack of ponds
against heavywork, this
brushed bronze

My head a telephone book
listing me, the beginning
of days (if yours reel in comets

miles to: where?
Palmyra / Broomfield / some
lost possession? mine—
where does it separate

earth's amniotics
(from a dialect)
down the equator

gauze of middle
(spoke) overlooking
the Skuykill

to exist from

end & everywhere

the easy voices

I have to conjure yours
I am also moving

though it is harder
to treat my
sheets like platelet

oceans / dry
as abrasion, snow

Day Three

cold compress

As if these days were tufts
of corn silk, we separate our messages

by their texture, their decency. Today
he heaved himself so forcefully

into my arms, it knocked me over. Also
dishes and laundry, also photographs

of past loves, glossy like fish eyes
always covered in their boxes. But still

there, still charged with some random
ionic glow that bothers my thighs

with tingle. Keep them, but keep them away,
and we have not lost our ease

with each other. You are so far
inside of yourself in those dry

brittle pipelines, so blown into borrowed
spaces, you can only find middle.

The tightest part. The space where we are
up against each other, limbs taut and twined,

seeing how hard we
can push without disturbing the words.

Corporeal

here I am

here I am

and maybe nothing will come

have you known about burial
& what it asks when exhaustive
and opposite “path”

you’ve yours
I’ve mine (only recently
as the air feels recent

in my lungs, I gravitate
by its sensation of company)

I’ve been facing east
when I should be—
wait, there’s no sunset
this evening in Riverton

if there is, I wasn’t there for it

who you & I are speaking to

pronouns like helium
(a glut of balloons stealing
off into the non-human
world they were anchors once

what upper bound (bounds?) or overturned
eyelash or prone parenthesis
have I
to unfurl above

the lives I might have had
am I hiding? certainly / perhaps /
(backing down) it’s possible

from my joys
as though they bore me out
of their sentences, pruned, pared

I could not look at myself again
for fear I'd be nothing to you
content (con-tent)
in any emptiness

other than this (as if)
it leered at nothing

Day Four

Intimation, dust, dusk

10. idon'tmemints
fast track & Corona
spur of the scurry
finishline & vinca tremble

radials of wrinkled
faces thumbing their
lotto slips "5 to win"
"3 to place"

outloud need, musing at
the procurement & the
let-slip— you as fleetly
tread, trot along the gift

of railing, picnic lapses
blinking encourages
saddling smiles
toward electric on black

odds later rescind
themselves for shower
& Farberware & lime
smokey liminal

excess of hours
your skin tracks
conditioned gliding
bent around penultimate

furlong— how do they
not sink into & slow

how do we not leap
over, sunburned, dehydrated
placing 1st, 3rd, 10th
also flexed, outstretched

leaning into one another
frame by frame, flashing
against the dirt (futures)
at fractions of a breath

Waltzing Matilda

Yes, a lapse, as the cola-colored
sky belittles me, shakes me

dizzy before I wake. You are
moved to change your ending,

earlobes pressed against the ice
after the fact. Heavy boxes,
carried low. I should apologize

for the pronouns, so dark.
So carbonated. But it's less
about that than it is

about me and/or you
raking through spring soil, flecks
of mercury. Imagine your eyes.
How could it be? The foamy head

in a bell-shaped glass.
Corona. Your unexpected
benchmark, looking for a benchmark. Winter
and meatloaf do not comfort me. Mostly

because I'm buoyant. I wander through this day,
all brick-a-brack and blinking. I am so
unlike a quatrain, yet here I am, next to you,
falling so easily into place.

Day Five

Dunes

I've decided
I will observe myself
for the lack of a language

I will be your sleep,
your folding-in of
hard-fought May

redundancy of dryness

how skin cracks when
wind / water-marred / driven as lines
(ours?) palpitate, applied liberally

to the referent
the nonchalant
excision . . . or lust for

what / my eyes flare red
again, I must (*must I?*)
revert to you / dislodge where

floating is walking
walking is feeling
yesterday's casual conference

caving into virulent
mooring / tectonic / print
sick as clinging is

drag me (*this is not a
request, a refusal*)
miles under protozoan
reefs (appetites)

I know what I hunger for
anchorage, steepness
the insistent electricity

but how do you

cope with / go on (directed inward)
sift through

intangible braids / looped knots

our italics / fan shells / shed
titles / the emaciated
swearing-in— improbable

as it is strangely lax
peeling from insomnia
our indigo frowns

Folder

In certain light, his lips
look blue, serpentine
to disaster and spite.
Gone. Color-coded

and gripping or fighting
despite ourselves. You must
only think of dogwood, sprouting
lilacs that fizz with

syrup. You could ignore it,
swim away and out
in this gargantuan lake.
Or you could stay.

Imagine he could float
forever. That is how
I see him, clinging
to the water. How I see you

is phosphoric:
draped in lightning
and crude oil. Without asking,
you would hand me a buttercup

in a fist full of grass.
That's how I go on.
Imagining you, shedding
light in pieces, cerulean,
staccato, onto my lap.

Day Six

Catapulted

How long have we

here

are we (heard)

spacious

as intersection and iron filings

“tree” call it delay and CO²

declaration

posit a key, do you not

need to shed your cut-orchid

pasts

that we may (together)

liquefy “send / receive”

grapple with the perishable

night-snow, a purse

clenched— *climb in to stay*

warm midway thru forceps, star,

cuticle

do not look back, Persephone

if that is who you are today

the kelp, all one hundred feet of it
depleted

i am done

you are what

with mirages, overcast

as surface, gauge / sent up / pulled back

all blood-rush & mylar

“seen” like cyclamen, portal: as tenuous
a scent or lastly *i ask you*

step away from it

Darkling

We have been here for day(s)
logging about among

the promise of frost. In May.
I think of you when I follow

the curve of the door
with my paintbrush, unforeseen

disaster everywhere. I must
touch it up. White

under my fingernails for days.
Talk of orchids and rain

is all I discern. Walls and sheets
and pinaster pines' paired needles.

Gobbling up the gestures you give,
the wet trail you leave as

you make your way to meet me
here on the blue page. Today

is the coldest on record. Darkest, too.
Alabaster decisions, shreds

of pomegranate, all skin and flesh
but no seeds.

Day Seven

Loosening: two systems of sunlight

On Locust Walk faces (if we trust them)
feel real

I am okay with what I have reclaimed
(which isn't much) & I refrain from

names, incarnations as we've become
to one another brightened by proximity

spirit / vast uncommon roving
fierce : "eyesight" something to be

tapped into *I must ask you*
at risk of an ordinary moment

is the sky as beautiful a disaster its movements
& preludes as you've seen in Chicago

there are, as here, clouds— blithe containments
but is it true

Maybe I only crave response an everywhere-ness
even ceilings provide occasionally empty rooms

whose walls intrude forehead to the floor
such mornings I begin courting a kind of

vapor & fastidious climate (gratitude) *we wither by*
you and I *notate ourselves*

on tradewinds and myrrh their scorched,
narrow trails these reliefs weakly

corresponding to vacuous sheared
maps of pack-ice (streams) / overgrowths

of rock weeping as lavender does
as fences constrain / fail to failing

their buds tangled precipitation / iodines
wire-crested pouring out from (our)

most intangible searchlight / vertices
viscous in variation

Three Days of Rain

“Or everything,” I want to say, but
can’t because I’m so far under

shallow puddles, accumulated debris
taken down with the rain. Nothing, maybe.

Something unnamable and viscous.
What was the question? Mud

where dust should be. Feeling you
move within this distance, sometimes

galloping into a simple arrangement
too close to be dismissed. Here. here. The spectators

flock to see the game, the wind
blowing in from left field. Flags

heavy and slow. Virtual
experience is enough for us now.

Your elbows at a particular angle
I find fascinating. Your sternum,

divisible by two. What other parts are
divided, cleft like a split-rail

fence holding me there? Here.
Holding this moisture like a dam,

holding together, away,
against the gleaming fossils

of how we see
each other now.

Day Eight

Spent

There are days when nothing
can extrapolate me but the rain

I am sick of windows how they
act as though I am transparent

carnations of drought butting
against the always looking-in

thorn *crick*— nothing comes
because the conversation my

body has broken into is myopic
elided perspiring I could leave

it there whole on the radiator agape
saying WE MISS YOU COME BACK

It could persuade me to say this
to you as though that could balance

my mass cyclonic pyramid of loose
bones I call a constitution I don't

fit my clothes well My skin expands
haphazardly "Home" smolders, curls *in*

I am dendrite filament millisecond
inhabiting the— I can't finish this

(what is it) having always been
translation of ache worn through

skin a flannel condensation
restrained a steam reprises

sings its "as though" and
"what if" and "why now"

Seeing you

It is my left eye that blurs,
coats every object,

vehicle, word, figure
with fuzz. Your sadness.

I wish I could spread it out
like chicken wire and wrap

this city up in it, drive away,
Up, up and away. Your movement.

Clarity there. You on a highway,
headed east-west through the clavicle

of Kentucky, all left turns
till you hit your own body,

lying on the dusty shoulder next to
scraps of retread. I can't see you

clearly. You are not surprised
by my blur, my stigmatism.

You are most surprised to see
yourself there, on the highway.

Then look for me. Storm cloud
to follow, windshield wipers

frantic and elusive. My arms
waving hysterically, grasping

at rain, at windows, at the puff
of steam you have become and gone.

Day Nine

On the Banks of Whatever Recedes

I surrender my body
as hide drum-weather
tight ellipses portrayals

beaten into it—
watershed relinquishing

what stirs within

about-face releasing
thrusting arriving
shallower than

hours themselves dimes
committed to rust
at the bottom

a galaxy
silt-glimmer briefly
receives endings

such as we were
enclosed have you or I
any other way the means

to surrender eyelids first
one at a time irises
both at once I surrender

the incendiary breath I've
taken in through my nostrils
dug-out equators

skylight / bridge excerpted
() from river opening
its exotic incisions

I turn blue beside the
fountain of my body
imploding nameless

I surrender what I don't
have to surrender frostbitten

when I let go

forms as secretive: shadow
waves accretion—
scars mine / yours

in the broadest possible

pastlife

As if collapsible

I compare your drafts, looking
for stray marks, enclosures, seaweed,
watermarks or even a coastline.

I compare my body to what it
used to be: barely there at all,
crooked, driftwood, elongated. In both cases

there is no comparison, only alteration.
Rain again collapsing the afternoon

which, compared to yesterday,
is shorter. The urge to go backwards.
Years, gigabytes. Each day a prism

I see you through. Where you pull
back, I douse the moment
with momentum. Where I pull back,

you find a word, even in brackish
dusk, to drive me in again. Shiny

things appear in the background noise.
Find their way here. Listen to the sound-
waves, drenching even the sea foam.

Garrulous stretch, pitch high and
fallow. Strangers to bodies,
we compare them to water. I think

I haven't let anything go. But then
again, what isn't floating away?

Day Ten

Imminence

Everything is conjoined
in the silence / river

quadrant we step down

from drafts of body
revised by their
distance a liquor

150 proof starlight
dripping from the smudged
rim how we say

this is what
feels bright capsizes

returning vibrantly / squinting

reverses us
to stillness scythe

of daisies oleander
the only flowers I know

because in you

I feel revealed I am

let go into the soil
drunk / worm-

loose threaded by
name only a concordance

of roots I resist (sifting)
fend off suffocation

parched finery
capillaries our hours

investigate artesian
& grey arrowed at the tips

Compass into what

If everything is
 in the river
then where has it gone
dilapidated journey home

spliced and double spliced
until brightness
is only a bead
but alive and crashing
like the moon against
the revised galaxy
hailstorm drenching the back alley

I call for you in this rerun
to make me sing the roundness
of each word orbit
plump enroute to you

Up to our hips
in vibrating water
We are alive because we dip down
and swim

"surface tension" is the second collaborative poetry project by Mackenzie Carignan and Scott Glassman. This chapbook was created specifically for the Dusie collaborative chapbook project. Mackenzie lives in Chicago and Scott lives in New Jersey. All collaboration has taken place electronically. Portions of their first collaboration, "Helixes," can be found in *dusie* #3 at dusie.org.

* a *dusi* / e-chap
<http://www.dusie.org>



DUSIE