



surface tension  
*a 10 day tryst*

SCOTT GLASSMAN & MACKENZIE CARIGNAN



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[WWW.CHRISCARIGNAN.COM](http://WWW.CHRISCARIGNAN.COM)

## 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 38<sup>th</sup> & *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 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>  
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.



## **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](http://dusie.org).

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



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