

the listening lost

by Mackenzie Carignan



*Here we do
rise, spear
atmosphere, jaunt
like bargains
into each other's
hands. A black-
bellied cloud rolls
into us even
though we suffocate.*

*It is not
a star, she said,
it is a house
on a hill. We live
in it. We do not
live in a star.*

taps

“whose light?” she said, the bungalow vibrating and twisting her syntax. “who’s light,” she corrected herself, when the answer was perplexing. in your eyes, I see a dust devil wrestling a chinook. you can imagine that touch. first one. gypsum off on your hands. she is happy when it calms. though it does not answer her the second time. the violent barb erases her face. in certain shadow, which makes her phenomenal. she goes there with me to find him. we are. ourselves shadowing.

before dark
watch going
fret cave

slow slow
slow slow

her disaster
his ox
folded flag

trumpet
gone
trumpet gone

friction that becomes light

singular forward spear. into, becoming you. not you, like a table, but you like a strangulating dive. I want to lift you, but have already failed. then what. do I want to do with you. do you care that I think of circuses, their angular desire for movement? then what? do I do with the pile. of horses and candy, for you. for you have not heard of me.

you moved past me in a carousel, in a subway, in a late spring blizzard. you spread out, like a giant, each organ occupying twice its size with light. absorbing royg biv. reflecting the particles of my desire. this is where I falter. in the promenade, the babies are strolled. past and passive. how they dread the ligaments, always attached. the fishing line, hanging their unmentionables. sometimes, they awaken to a night, unaware of words. then they sing strings of fricatives. where we are. singing for you, who are only sounds.

things on the floor

gone long, I wonder about piles. how they form.
how long it takes without you. where is the news,
the wringing kudzu vines that spell out a curse
from blocks away? I feel a small slice of you from
here. incomplete but sharp and penetrating. but
listless. but a jingling tassel from your ankle.
begin here, you ask, more like a limb than a
branch. what where. you finally say you want
me. but I wasn't. listening. piles of scraps of
thoughts of you. of water of lakes. of pieces but
small and collaged. where do we get together?
where do we stack our bodies in the fields and
hide among the wreckage?

hospice

frozen grapes and sugar. host. addictive like smear.
heavily sedated and bleeding into a bag. imagine
write this forever. catch the last phrase. u. a nod.
third time for saying this. and more. iridescent
means rainbow. remember the glass. don't remem-
ber that. it's harder than bone. turn away. t. t. t.
the last of it escapes. just a minute. interment.
finding out. the way water merges when it meets.
story of blue lips and kissing them. who would like
to hold hands?

final photograph

only road-dust to float you now. without a body.
through the swinging eye. roof into dust. win-
dow into pile wind exile. you would have gone.
but not as soon. you say as a stone in my dream.
every morning. woke. photograph. three kneel-
ing women. scabbed knees. the smallest, light-
est tree. no more wall. but the window. water I
cannot move through. oranges. candles. a drive-
way, a moat. my watery, glittering eyes. horn.
wave. always to goodbye. the last picture ever
taken of you. weight on me. gravel loose under
toes. you are small like a child. like a drowning
child. in a river. in an eddy. caught in swirl.

terminal

trickle down brown stones. walking in autumn woods. dogs, a chorus, an answer. inside, talk of winter and ash. quietly but slowly. so much so, I have to turn around. we will carry, they say, until it drops. pockets full of tissues. punctual. lighting the pilot. waiting to ignite or expose. I have kept them all, the cards. the occasions for your words. your handwriting tall and slender like spruce trees, bending in an easterly. winter wind. bending as you recline. moving backwards through the polyps on your spine. we are laughing; we are laughing with you. dog is quiet, curled like a branch. the garrulous wind. speaking sends me back. today I have read three books about reading. mustard flour, not mustard flower. i fear for your sleep, your neverwaking. hoping. impossible to go the wrong way. the precise science of death, hiding in the doghouse, is calculating your worth.

ambience

walk. so far behind. in always light of copper
spoons. ending slips past my iris-rim. slips in
because I let it. slips in because you are so far
behind. slips in because the spoon is only a vehi-
cle. why aren't you. catching me. walk. a casual
meander. ending walks in light. my wake is cop-
per light. too far behind. twice removed from
orange. the light asleep but on me. finds you
already dreaming. what do I do. but shine. too
awake to reach you.

the sting

I knew you would be here, caching figments in the back room, devastating small children with a lemon rind in your smile. It passes the time. Flawed, an inkblue sky behind water, highway like a reed weaves in and out. In your own time. Citrus fermenting, floating among residents and swimmers. Open sores. Heat pulls back as if you commanded it. *She cries* is all you know. She's been swimming for days. She shows you her fingertips, bleached white, shriveled and mimetic.

little thing

the decorum is about to bobble. hold on, she says,
teeth clenched and chattering. the veneer of
thrust is behind us now. he is a strange sort of
confidence, shredding the given sun. diorama.
your clavicle turns like a harpsichord, finding its
key. playing shadows. come here. you are about
to lose your ribbon, nobody said. to me. you are
about to be lost. nobody. said nobody, all of
them alive with red poesies. hyacinths. cats curl-
ing like yellow fog in our guttural speech. bauble.
all of us bobbling. take it down from there, little
thing. it has been too long. thread. aviation.
soon the weaving. soon the weaving will be done.

Poems compiled for the Dusie e-chap kolektiv,
a project proposed and orchestrated by Susana
Gardner.
Poems in this chapbook are part of a longer
work-in-progress .

