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Prescripts

I.

These things, then,
occur as simultaneous: subways, sutures, the bind

of the blind sublime. Today I shine my skull, I sweat
the smallest, my blood clots softly

but conversations clog.
In this meeting, I am advocating my own obsolescence.

In this moment, I am instantly inserting more
cowbell, craving not electroclash karaoke but

punk rock cabaret.

II.

Hello, how you are you, you who I know
I knew. You know that life

conspires & while I stare
into sunglare to understand time's

slide, you've assumed the stigmata to spite
brightest skies.

III.

I am,
I said, & ink released in defense against

Helvetica or a vetting
in the edits & yet

I was left
a small blue thing, a ball of string,

love of carpet, love of desk, love of
lamp. Nevertheless

this mesh won't hold my inner
Eskimo & nothing here is

burning, that smell is not
smoke.

IV.

This, then, is crystal wrists, metaphysical
graffiti. This is hymn

to St. Vitus,
St. Anger, Our Lady of Endless Windburn

& Ennui. Meanwhile ashes pass
as snowflakes, not the other way around. Meaning

sirens, semaphore, slippage
into an unnerved

earth.

V.

This, then, will be trilogy
in five pieces, greetings sent to cleave from ether

even as reach exceeds my meager grasp. My hands
are chapped. We never clap.

I know it's late.
Hello.

Book of Placebos

Growing suspicious of pundits, stockpiling for hibernation.

Dreams set in the childhood house, the high school house,
the house that doesn't exist.

Reading quickly, he skimmed for organic ingredients.

Reading quickly, she skipped to the naughty bits.

From an office in a strip mall to a strip bar called "The Office":

all his friends went high modern, but he's still lowbrow.

Marzipan hangovers, melancholy scones.

They elected for brunch over nights at St. Elmo's Bar,
they each had hopes of publishing their memoirs.

When she called the gesture "poetic," she meant "futile"

& so he stifled the diphthong of longing,
stuffed it deep inside her aorta's core.

It was the pleasure of repetition more than the repetition of pleasure,

& it was the perks of working in the service sector

like guessing when best to avert one's eyes

or knowing slips are for mistresses while diamonds
are for wives.

Book of Legends

I.

Mass para-
transit & tourist then

horse
shit. Tar then skip

their
light, neither

feather
nor fandango.

II.

Blink & eyelids pinhole
into fissure,

asphalt's fractured
chasms seen as

atlas
of unrest.

Book of Prophesied Pox

If there be snap-
dragons then there are

minotaurs & next our daughters
start stretching spandex across still-

flat chests while wishing twice upon some
young wolf to snarl against their slenders,

swell them skull-sad & rabid as he
huffs his shuddered milk.

Poe in Philadelphia

Quod in the New World

*with his new toothbrush
designated extra soft*

— Michael Palmer, *Q*

I.

Poe savors roast duck, licking the fat from his fingers, sipping a mai tai that floats within a gigantic plastic dragon. Noting that his Rolex has stopped once again, Poe asks nearby conventioners for the time, rushes to hail a cab before he is late for his hot stone massage at Toppers Spa.

II.

Poe visits Kenneth Cole, pays in travelers checks for a black leather duster, leaving his moldy old frock coat crumpled on the dressing room floor. Sales associates draw straws to see who will have to remove the garment, set it afire in a distant dumpster.

III.

Poe in an Old City record store, debating the merits of snotty Johnny Rotten vs. ironic John Lydon, ultimately becoming bored and feigning absorption in a photo of Kylie Minogue. Poe strolls over to Morimoto, orders the tasting menu, sips overpriced sake while awaiting fantail sushi, makes awkward conversation with the trendy young couple to his right.

IV.

A man and a woman are one. A man and a woman and Poe are one. Long before dawn, Poe rises to rummage for his clothes, curses that last shot of Cuervo, and creeps away, slipping his shoes on silently in the hallway. Nevermore, Poe promises, never again, not ever. And this time, he means it.

V.

Poe sits fidgeting on the subway, regards a striking young woman immersed in a volume of his selected works. Smiling benignly, Poe finally comprehends the shadow he has cast with his casks and cats, almost feels a moment of satisfaction.

VI.

Poe of donuts and tacos, chocolates and cheesesteaks. Poe a brand man, favoring Marlboro and Coke over generics. Poe knows the slippery slope, clutching a styrofoam coffee cup and paper plate of sugar cookies. Poe admits to a higher power, wonders how far to the nearest bar.

VII.

Poe eschews the art house in favor of *American Pie 2. Bravo*, Poe intones after a fart joke, *Bravisimo*. Poe is pelted with Milk Duds, dissolves into his seat, leaving in his place an empty bucket of popcorn and a tiny origami swan.

VIII.

On Poe goes, past the landmark which seeks to pass itself off as his old home, past the gun range and the massage parlor, past the caravan of police vans, and on to Silk City, where he sits at the counter and devours an enormous portion of huevos rancheros. Poe, a man of great appetites, demands seconds after licking his plate clean.

IX.

Alarmed by Poe's gaze, the young woman exits the subway three stops before her destination. As she slips through the closing doors, Poe silently compares her mane of red hair to the flames of the reborn phoenix.

X.

Poe stops in Barnes and Noble for a quick piss, spots a book entitled *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe*. Poe fondles the glossy cover, slick images of his own grim visage staring back at him. *Yes yes*, he hisses, *yes yes yes yes yes*, slyly slipping the volume inside his coat pocket and slinking toward the door. Tripping sensors and outsprinting an overweight security guard, Poe collapses in the park to catch his breath, admires the small bronze sculpture of a goat, revels in his devilry.

XI.

Poe scribbles notes with a pencil stub, stuffs them in his pants pockets, which have holes in them, which allow the notes to disappear, whole tales crushed underfoot in the gutter, which is where Poe would like to stop for a nap, which he'll let himself to do just this once, which makes perfect sense, Poe thinks, his face pressing against the cement, the ache in his chest spreading like a small bird with fluttering wings.

XII.

Impulsive Poe hits the art museum stairs at a run, humming "Eye of the Tiger." Halfway up, Poe begins to levitate, hesitates only momentarily before truly rising, arms flapping in awkward flight.

XIII.

Poe at Open Mic Night, chanting and incanting for the indifferent intelligentsia who sit sipping espressos. Annoyed and buoyed by a flask of courage, Poe drops his trousers, invites, nay, implores the assembled ingrates to kiss his ancient ass. The applause is resounding. Poe turns to bow, pants around ankles, and holds this pose until the last hipster has finished snapping his fingers.

Book of Exposures

stretches
the

, obscuring

light traces tight lips
densely woven,

her long hair hangs

stutters
suggest blocking
depth. mesh over flesh
torsos sequence

tension
; seemingly
arms

silvery

black this.
her unrushed poses
flushed
as she

frame outlined, betraying
shutter speed

erasing facial features.

no emotion
of hide or heavy shield,
stark sculpted perhaps
sightless or

opacity
stutters for flash.

hips' slant
is intention: these
fingers brush netting,
show

repose of flash-
flesh here, lashes gesture
light.

stutters sequence:
blocking
sheen over flesh.
gaps

of artifice,
her long hair hangs

Book of Chambers

*We go about our business in the rooms and corridors
of the Splendide-Hôtel. Outside, the black polar night,
a chaos of glaciers.*

— Gilbert Sorrentino, *Splendide-Hôtel*

I.

& the strings begin,
build momentum in increments.

Dear Apnea:

The air here
is orange hued, gelatinous, somehow

lacquered in light now golden, everyone
disrobing &

not hesitant
but a question simply of slowing motion,
a sense of curve versus straight progression.

II.

The drive
winds & the riff ascends in this tangle

of wires, wings beating at the
rafters.

Dear Flux:

When asked, the password
is *spider-*

wasp & when
asked, one must pantomime

the taming of fireflies, the threading
of ribbon thru once-

slackened skin.

III.

Dear Fractal:

Outside is a city of reworked
nocturnals, of softened

gothic architectures & here is our pig
on a spit, our snakes glittering

in the graveyard. Here
we light a burner

or furnace to make these old bones
shiver & shake

this sluggish
blood.

IV.

Dear Rose:

Already the bow
is brandished, the chandeliers dimmed,

the windows thrown open
to the cold.

Dear Siren:

What is this water so heavy
& hard. Your song

is all echo, its chorus knocked off-kilter.

Dear Angels,

both Burning & Blue:

Book of Organs

Constantly climbing out of windows, falling off of high-wires, feeling one's way through the shadows.

Prone to wearing greatcoats, to lying prone in the middle of fields.

Rumored to suffer from colic. Consumption. Geographic tongue.

{ *or* }

The quest to construct one's own edifice, work sound beneath each era's trappings.

Problem is, no one remembers how to build things from scratch. Problem is, it's dark in the belly of the beast, and no one brought a match.

{ *or* }

One returns from the strangest of journeys a robot, a hollow-eyed ghost with shirt stained, shoes scuffed, suit covered in dust.

One cultivates a distaste for suburban sprawl, laments its lack of center, compares its aesthetics to the stench of spiteful, lingering death.

{ *or* }

Question: Are there quarks inside our floorboards, one wonders, does quicksand shift within our constellations?

{ *or* }

Can this be song be sung, somehow, from between one's kidneys? Ponder a politics of debauchery, an economics of sloth.

{ or }

Having been unable to quit the day job, also unable to hold one down. Having then been inked, dyed, poked with holes, having known each blister's rip, every splice, slice, cauterization.

{ or }

Question: In a battle between zombies and cannibals, who would win?

Question: If one were to speak in a "robot voice," that is, a voice that sounded mechanical and emotionless, into an electronic device that is capable of converting normal human speech into its own version of a "robot voice," would the voice that emerged from this contraption be "normal," that is, non-robot-like, full of nuance and emotion, with the two robot voices canceling one another out?

{ or }

Exhausted from dancing soft shoe to their hurdy-gurdy's endless tune.

{ or }

Weary of wandering, questing for rest.

Wishing to shift this itch from one's phantom limb, inching imperceptibly toward the exit.

{ or }

Question: If one were merely a disembodied voice, a ghostly whisper

{ or }

If one were merely many, one, none

Postface

To slay one last computer-
generated dragon, to erase, efface,

dismember. From behind his chemical peel,
he thrice denied his metrosex.

In the margins
of his blue book, he glossed the sonnet
by writing, “You are pretty, you are selfish,

you will die alone.” “Loud
Bomb” therefore becomes

an anagram for wormholes,
a boy’s funhouse walls. Everywhere gaper
delay, these gaps

in the causeway, catcalls to relapse,
reload, resurrect. Still he dreamt

of trains & teeth falling
from sockets, he feared a crooked

frame & so drove not a single nail. He was
mouth

open, thumbs
broken. He was coveting the gutter
but settled for the stars.

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