

TO WISH TO COOK WITHOUT RICE

How strange—business cards at a shrine.
This one desires luck
in cutting my hair.
This one desires luck
in selling me a house.
Have I been as honest?

On the road to the shrine
there were barbecued sparrows
spread-eagled over coals.
They were seared black
as their shadow once was,
twitter spitting deliciously.
My mouth watered for one
but I couldn't say so.

Everywhere has its own
the world's largest ferris wheel.
I keep mine here
(*touches chest*)
but do not ride it.

I wish to cook without rice,
I replied. We both knew
I meant an impossibility.

MOUTH

This is a celebration of the disassembled:
We had a joke in our family, one tourist
says to the other and then says something
completely unfunny. Here, at the ruins

of Rome's original port, a five o'clock shadow
of algae covers a mosaic of Mithras' face.
Mithras was a sort of proto-Jesus.
Dude. Sorry your cult didn't make it.

This place fell off the map
when the river moved right, said something
under its breath, out of the corner of its mouth.
The land forgot the taste of the sea,

its first industry. The joke was on Ostia
like a river is on land. How did it go?
We saw your mouth moving,
but couldn't hear a single thread you said.

SOMEDAY, ALL OF THIS WILL HAVE TAKEN SO LONG
TO BUILD THEY'LL CALL IT MY FOLLY

In my mouth, there is an error cloud.
Take what I say with a grain of rain.

I don't remember
the first time I ate a radish

only that they are part of this adult life
as was the flock of Stymphalian birds

that Hercules scared into air
by bronze castanets and shot.

Above, a rocket plugs the sky.
If I put this coin in you what will come out?

There is no pleasure
like eating a mollusk off the chest of Zeus.

A mummy of an ibis rides the mummy
of a man. This is a cautionary tale;

do not play the flute while angry.
Remove your turban, Winckelmann.

Reveal your great radish head; pull up
your most underground thoughts.

Who knew, when I put on my bird suit,
that I was that kind of bird?

When I get in the accident, I swear
I will wear a neckbrace of happiness.

Until then, I'll plant wild strawberries
as if that were even possible.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS SANT'ANDREA DEL QUINIRNALE

I'm an oval thought hammered
at a roundish hole. I'm a needle
and filigree. I'm an irregular exclamation,
a lowly halo upon a holy, flowy head.
Please note: I'm in my post-medieval period.
A tour group floods my soul,
uninterested in being interested.
I long for a place in the country-
a Rome away from Rome. A place
where I can be a foolish virgin again.
Where I don't have to keep gilding
every silly lily, don't have to put up
with putti, don't always have to have
my face on. I'd like to go *au naturel*,
wear nothing but unhewn marble,
gold unsplit from the mountain's veins.

YOU KNOW THE ONE

That was the year snow consolidated its efforts and sent just one large flake.

When the sky was the overarching theme.

When I looked at us under a microscope and couldn't say we were unique.

When we finally forgot all the running mates of all the presidents who never won.

When we taped a bumper sticker to the back window so as not to fully commit to belief.

When we kept time by the Viking ship at the fair.

When we kept a bottle of glycerin handy for the look of tears.

When the thunder felt round the bones.

When I pinned happiness to you as a corsage.

When we needed it yesterday.

When the stars were held in place with lead clamps.

When all the trucks wanted to know how they were doing.

When I was the terrible opposite of loose cannon.

When I was a small shot and did not stray dangerously.

When I kept my heavy heart to myself.

When I was the too much eyeliner on teenage girls.

When the boy on the ferry was practicing "In the Jungle" poorly on his recorder and I had to love him for it.

When I was the lamp store at night: lamp after lamp after lamp unlit.

CEMENT MIXER

Churning
while hurtling,
drilling down
the way,
off to concrete
the next
abstraction,
to retain
the next knoll.
A giant urn
of unrest,
a gravely
yearning,
a hard burn.

O mixer,
you and me,
if we stop
to think,
we get harder
than we
already are.

THIS HUMAN

One ax grazes
on wood, lifts its head,
sets to grazing again. Six shovels
bang their heads against the wall.
Three wheelbarrows upend,
wheels grazing the sky. What is most human
in all of this is this blue metal cover
set into asphalt saying "Water"
though it is not nor does not. It lies
out the side of its mouth, equivocates,
tells one thing to the sky, another
to the ground. What is not human
is the very center of this tree. What is human
is the fact that I can put my nose
to the very first ring, the sapling
at its freshly cut core. What is human
is the way we say "moss" as if it's singular.
The moss knows it's of many minds.
I know because ten years ago I was a mess
of minds, too: on the one hand, a rotting picnic table;
on the other, an anchor anchored
to an anchor. On the one hand a sign
saying "Caution: children at play,"
on the other, an empty bike rack
in the weeds. Today, cloudberries
on branches cantilever out
from the trunk offering tiny microclimates
of emotion for this human to stand in.
Every branch branches out. No good
branch has ever circled back.
My id is a black bear who mediates
the argument at the edge of the sea.
What is human is wondering
if the sea dreamt last night
and if so about what. It dreamt about
that reoccurring anxiety dream
that it missed the exam, missed
the exam, missed the exam
against the rocks. The rain

is trending downwards,
falls in our eyes
in order to be cried.

BEFORE BEING INDUCED

-For Sierra

& now we are on a group rafting tour—
it seems we're in New Zealand,
but then I ask you so this is Finland?
& so it is Finland it is
a long trip & we are building
our own rafts someone says
we are never more than a foot
from water & I am sitting at the edge
of the water & then yes in the water
yes I'm really in the water now I regret
coming on this trip but you are here
with me now in the back
of a foreign truck such strange trucks
in these foreign counties
such strange conveyances
these bodies you are taking
photos of the Finnish roads
from the back of the truck we are
bouncing unrestrained in the open beds
of trucks like we are children
before safety was invented
like we are children
the night before we have children

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Rebecca Hoogs is the author of *Self-Storage* (Stephen F. Austin University Press) which was a finalist for the 2013 Washington State Book Award in Poetry, and a chapbook, *Grenade* (GreenTower Press). Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *AGNI*, *FIELD*, *Crazyhorse*, *Zyzzyva*, *The Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Florida Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, and others. She won the 2010 *Southeast Review* poetry contest and is the recipient of fellowships from the MacDowell Colony and Artist Trust of Washington State. She is the Associate Director for Seattle Arts & Lectures and occasionally co-directs and teaches in the summer Creative Writing in Rome program for the University of Washington.