

from *THUNDERHEAD*

...

I push my fingers into the crevices
of volcanic rock
send messages to a better future
made of eights
eight
revolutions in misting exteriors (as in film)
once upon a time
I passed through rooms
touched
in prayer
like a piano
I wished to drop
like rain into a pool
ovoid moon harboring the lowest note
so rude
these were my efforts to stay alive
amidst plague years of a different kind
a kind of dreaming
that is, being small
smaller than the branches that buoyed me,
a tapestry of indeterminate asteroidal wandering
I sometimes have conversations with the ghost
of my love's love
hold hands with a book
little pulses shimmer through the room
like a nervous system and I am reminded of parties, how we
used to love scavenging the corners
for a past life
like decapods scavenging
the body
as it decomposes into ubiquity
air fluctuates like cells
travelling through a monastery
kitchen where radishes ferment, reviving
the wisdom of ancestors
what picture of solitude can you offer up
without stretching its membrane to a disaster of paleness

What's looking back at you from inside *your* cup?
echoes of delusion & terror? a small wet likeness,
with scales that tell the future?
it's easy to project your personal set of eels
onto the dark
but this is Pisces, reformed
sharp fingers grope toward us from the great obsidian pupil of Spring
Earth grieves inside our lungs
gray & questioning
drawn alone
I stoke fires &
mourn
no more adolescent desires, no touch
or tender moments strung like string beans at a fox's wedding
I cry inside my mask
in the grocery aisle
make spontaneous puzzles
out of simple acts of being, harbor shock
like broth
steaming in an
earthen bowl
this month is for Spring cold
darkness
like plums, is for folding sheets in half light
often, I make tea & argue
with chipped dishes

they seem to bend in my hands along
the slow soapy pull
of the planet's longing
like light
slides around
the optic disc, then refracts,
bearing messages from the burning ash
both of my brains can smell—

Beloved, you rock in Cassiopeia's chair
in a moment lingering like plasma
the buffalo know how a revolution moves
through us seemingly endless cloud
of conscious thought like candle smoke like
how the bottom of a breath gurgles, after all
these years, they say the affliction may never leave
your body, beloved I am lighting candles for you
on the mountain, & the Reaper is sitting in my lap
curling his tail, & what is melting—it is everything,
hot, descending the leg of a table rotating
in space, a lie, a pack of them, claiming invincibility
as Jupiter comes into view, there is nothing simple
about the way the eye perceives a panorama
of horror, the buffalo know, vast plains
horripilate & the eye burns out—

Though the loosely bound pages of time seek
to describe our distance, you are here
with me now
slung under the arm
of the great stone giant who navigates fate
counting every step you're taken away from home
where heaps of fabric lie
collecting fungi in the basement
home
where you smoke a cigarette & hang
your body out the upstairs window
listening to owls
& the drug dealer doing donuts on the lawn next door
in a red truck
like a spell against death
good lord
these greasy days
my mind
in anthills
cymbals strike I fold the taste of falling into
into the batter
& though I approach the altar
with hope
& a desire to be loved
I receive only smoke
burning oil paintings
& sympathy comes only from the leaves

Yes to the notion of sleeping through live birth,
no to the coward's trail of lighter fluid.

yes to a country of only children,
no to eating grubworms & moss.

yes to spirit,
no to god.

yes to fluttering like a ribbon of incandescence through saline eternities,
no to turtle soup.

yes to paintings with more dismemberment,
no to colonial pride.

no to bunkbeds,
yes to ladders up trees near the abandonment well.

yes yes to eating fire
but never say yes when I plead.

only yes when unintended shades of apricot
bellow softly in a field of helium ringlets on the page,

only yes as we grope for our missing wings.
no to abstract guilt.

yes, please cover my grave in peonies
but rename them,

yes to dead grandmothers who are perfect because we never met them
who will forever remember our faces,

yes, thunder.
yes, cerebellum.
yes, sorrow.
yes, solace.

yes, our remainder,
but without us.

without what is gagged, without secret or sacrifice,
without a key—

CLAIRE BOWMAN

Claire Bowman is the author of a chapbook titled *Dear Creatures* (Sutra Press, 2017). She holds an MFA from the Michener Center for Writers, and her work can be found in *Black Warrior Review*, *Narrative Magazine*, and *The Volta*, among other places. Claire works as the Senior Editor at Host Publications, where she also produces a literary podcast called *The Host Dispatch*. She moonlights as a tarot reader and teacher with Typewriter Tarot in Austin. Follow her on instagram @clairethepoet. <<https://www.instagram.com/clairethepoet/>>