

Fever Dream
For Nicolette B.

Darling, were we witches yet back when it all began?
Remember my becoming

some new creature in your naked light,
some tender thing in constant relief against

a wall a tapestry of the ways we were both haunted
by colors. The breathlessness of our worst

nights has dimmed in the special sun that only
rises on the playa where I'll never see it –

I'll have to take your word for it that neon
never fades. You've been searching for your

tongue all the time that I have known you, and
you may have found out the trick: fling your breasts

to the four winds and exhale loud enough that
elementals strip off the most brazen of their frills,

leave them at your feet. That's how you always
look, like the goddess anointed you

with the dregs of her liquor as you poured it
for the masses, did not drink even when the man

doffed the hat at the end. The congregants found
him and themselves lit through with your saucy light.

You reached into the flames when they burned him,
when they set on fire your last reserve

and I gushed over you, geyser-like, the way
I did one of the two times I've squirted –

when your tongue was an electrode and you
bared your pussy to everyone, opened yourself

up and devoured the pulse of the common
man who lay discarded in the streets in the morning

as I walked home where your light still glared
from each surface, off even the sand you trekked

into my space, grains stuck to feet like ash or the bond
trauma could not break. If one of us tried we would

realize what a shameless flare I became: not
a mimicry but a delicately curated installation

of the contrition you never felt, which I used to take
on wholeheartedly with the best of intentions and

the worst results. You were lustier than I. You held me
between your teeth never biting, murmuring about us,

and him, them, all the uncensored photographs from
our second becomings, from the times we don't repeat

but sometimes still taste or dream about in harsh technicolor
that is softer in the luster of the diamonds you planted

underneath my skin, unpolished – no, undone.

I Am Not a Pack of Newports

I never kicked the habit
of leaving the cellophane sheath
on the bottom half of the pack.
My freshman year boyfriend taught me
you never know
when you might need a baggie.
Also, how to MacGuyver a pipe
from an Arizona can. He studied
engineering at Columbia. I studied
his fingers breaking up bud
on a tinfoil blanket and vomited
from vodka and smoke inhalation,
my binary moral code curdling
on the carpet. I left the plastic on
even when I was clean, hence
regularly focused on chasing the buzz
my friends and I purported to deny
ourselves while we put each other's
sobriety on trial in diner courtrooms
and on stoops lousy with Red Bull
cans and cigarette butts. You told me
Newports contain fiberglass which
slices the lungs for faster nicotine
absorption. What a neat trick when
everybody smokes to die.

Sun/Moon/Rising
For Dorothea Lasky

I have wanted to teach you a trick
since the first squirt of milk soured
to lavender as it retreated into
your breast before I could read it.
Augury is my favorite form of witchcraft.
Interpretation is a red roof, a sad
erection making you laugh, its bitter
alibi top-heavy, its hair a thready
mass – stretched saliva gawping, molding
around protuberance, lips painted like
indications of poison. Do you know we
have always loved on a cosmic scale?

The Cancer

I pushed and you pulled
away, you said you lost
something you lost
her two years ago I lost
him three years ago
on Saturday I would have
woken up next to you
your blond curls your
children asleep in a house
you own like a real man
you wanted to show me
the trails the stars
your children the house
where you slept with her
in the bed you stroked
the organ you made
sure I knew was thick
you had some insecurity
about that growing up
you were fat growing up
now you have deep Vs
cut into your slab and I
wanted to ignite under
your blanket of white
you are sea foam just
water just a wet wide
ocean of feeling but I
am the moon who rules
your sign you cannot
be the moon you cannot
rule me my womanity
for two weeks I burned
the oil for seven days
it burned a miracle
illuminated truths I was
not ready for a year
before but now I read
the shadows I turn
toward the ache I turn
the page I flip past
the places where I used
to lose momentum
where I used to get mired
in the dark without stars
in my gray matter, in

unknowing or knowing
too much with too much
judgment, too much
certainty because it's all just
a cosmic dialectic we are all
points and waves, pointing
and waving at ourselves
doing stupid shit
over and over
being less stupid about it
just a little bit less stupid
about it with each iteration,
everything just a golden mess
like the mutilated insides
of the double terminated
quartz I bought on Etsy
today because I decided
I could spend up to fifty dollars
on crystals I haven't done it
in a while and today today
you pulled away and I
I smoked but didn't burn up,
didn't self destruct, just
tended to my headache and
turned inward a little I'm
spinning fast phasing past
flashing shadows over the bridge
the water rushing rushing
you cannot be the moon
because I am the moon
falling away from myself, becoming
the Mother but also not yet,
but also a goddess

Repetition Kills You

You say you'll come to my place but I have to change the sheets. You ask if genital herpes affects my mouth, too. Do you even listen to yourself? If I could take back my virginity I would wed you in purple, ignoring your political leanings. In my vows I would reveal the removal of certain parts from my frame, the reassembling of everything into a post-modernist bouquet, a store of rotting meat. I had to remove your body from the chalk outline so I could lie down in its place, close my eyes and imagine resting my head on a curb somewhere new and repetitious, like a town with a thousand split levels or a labyrinth at the center of which was the only drop of the rarest pigment to ever exist in the universe: one bead the color of water suspended.

Threesome in Which One Party Mostly Observes
For Hannah B.

When I looked up from my pipe
exhaling smoke curling around
the tableaux, they had broken my bed.
A sex goddess had birthed herself
in the rubble, wrapped the man in
the umbilical cord, cut and run
leaving a half-trussed pig in the center
of my mattress still wet with afterbirth
smoking with coals where
normal women leave impressions
of their limbs, stray hair, or maybe
a comb.

Navigating between the hissing
stones is a job for the least
dainty among us which is why all
he could do was cup himself and
wait for me to disengage
long enough to care to trip
through the embers, untie
him, and even after that he wanted
to suck my tit for a couple of minutes
as if anything would ever come out
that could sustain a being so rooted
this side of the veil.

We drew it out, wedding
mouths to nipples, hands
to breastbones beneath the sickle
Goddess the way sisters have shared
their juice for generations, bloated,
bloody with pulp at the mouth.

Spleen

I may seem soft-bellied now
but I used to be a witch
I'd smear green paint on my face,
stick a fake mound on my nose
I scared the children and it gave me great pleasure
In private, bare-faced, I brewed elixirs for everything
under the bare-faced moon: love, knowledge, monetary
success

I didn't realize what I wanted
which was a cat with a feather duster for a tail
to sleep in my arms and purr on my stomach
when I had cramps
to spoon in the nightly pitch
of my bedroom
to swoon with me when the ghosts
materialized on the davenport
and throwing salt just angered them

A sack of skin I'd sit
by the window, missing
my organs which disappeared
in the night, wishing
I knew how to augur my guts through the hole
I'd tell my own fortune,
stuff them back in,
then walk alongside my
dress under the certain sky

Living Off the Fat of the Land

There was a largeness about you, not only
in your size but in your voice and in your
solar plexus, the way you rumbled
and rocked forth on your heels
when you had something meaty to say.
When we met your body repulsed me,
which perhaps is cruel to write but poetry
is never dishonest –
Submerged in you,
I never knew a body I loved better.
I reveled in the fold of your gut,
wanted to burrow in the soft flesh
and be warm. There was a largeness about you
that enveloped me, that kept me afloat
in the sea of tribulation which we wrought
around ourselves. It carried me forward,
impelled me to have largeness too,
to shed the notion that womanly meant
taking up less space. You always said
I could use another ten pounds.

Horizon

The hardest
part is the
beginning,
trying to
warm myself
beneath the
shadow
of the moment
like a tinfoil
blanket.
All of us
is gone
now. There
is no shade
or sun,
just needleless
pine trees
in agonizing
rows and
too many ashes
to separate.
The end is
mountainous.
It crumbles
in the
hand.