



TUNCE

NO. DEAR

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FOUND MEMBER
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"A Bullet to the Eye is the Price of Protesting in Chile"¹

Julius Caesar one thousand times for they and them and never us; we wouldn't know to call a sphinx a sphinx. There is no more turning and turning as though we suffer pirouettes: that old and slower way of chaos has gone straight and fast as the gunbarrel of a newsfeed. Likewise, I am thinning

into key questions and bizarre futures for myself and those around me. Still, I have both my eyes and the water comes reddening to meet them as if at sunset we deny the day is over or if at sunset we simply want to cry as blue succumbs to blood by what cheap hypnotic did we forfeit all the ice?

"7 of Our Top Stories From 2019"²

What effort do I really make? Approaching slaughter free of corn or antibiotics; on a line; mercy mercy mercy me; we walked a long way in the desert. On a line. 1 body, 2 body, 3 body, etcetera. Approaching slaughter with hymns for peace: knees bent into the backs of other knees and hands free to hold the heads of our loved ones when their necks are too

weak. When the hymns syncopate; when we breakneck; when we dance-walk exhaling more brass than animal and our proximity triggers goosebumps for the pain of others; when we look at them. When we look at them. When the act of looking is our chainmail.

¹ Headline taken from the article by Brent McDonald for The New York Times, published Nov. 19, 2019.

² Headline taken from the article by Azi Paybarah for The New York Times, published Jan. 2, 2020.

Bronx Roast Chicken Treehouse

1.

La Luna and I roost together atop Summit ave an 1/8 of kush spins lavender kaleidoscope
 watching stratus clouds criss cross the rush hour Major Deegan watching white people walk
 over the Macomb Dams footbridge from La Luna's window wondering how long before
 we're asking for advice about where to go next for a bottle of fabuloso for kin trodden
 floorboards where we'll be adding gaudules to every dish, to stretch it out cuz the 1st
 and the 15th leave us as fast as exhalations turn thoughts over to nostalgia and La Luna is ready
 to hum low tunes of lives left behind in the L.F.S. Call us home for dinner time A roast
 chicken from Molino Rojo torn limb by limb for our hungry suns our jovial monstruo a
 Bronx boy a band of sheen gaseous mists expand the last swirl of starch leaves the rice
 washed in a pot full of ghosts call them home for dinner time climb Bronx slopes for dinner
 time 8 mottled plantains for 2 dollars 9 for the cupboard 2 on top the fridge
 3 cut at an angle and plopped into sizzling pan salt flaked Orange Juice no pulp
 in a brightly colored quart box set aside ice cold for long hot showers at La Luna's request
 It's To time

2.

Listen up Baby Jupiter sparkle eyes save some abalone wishes and waow waow for mama's
 milk cupped from La Luna's sacred nectar receptor holding holy hand to heart and pumping to
 plump him up see me, I'm fairy tio a lazy boy of downtown lore ya mommy learned to
 conjure Chespirito Chapulin El Chavo del Ocho occasionally Cantinflas and I'm the long lost
 Marx brother the ones who make the most of what they've got without a lot to boast
 about Tio loves a dare to coax a chuckle a cheesy grin on this many moon child's face from a
 chiste out of nothing out of nowhere your nose your ear a quarter a stupid
 look a slice of pizza from Rosario's a glance out of your cradle of moonbeams emerge from
 every long Stanton street hallway heavy steps every 2nd avenue tunnel to run through waow
 waow waow fat baby Jupiter thick thighs and round booty peals of joy squiggle
 break north scotty brays to mama the Bronx is hollering at us Nuyorican fathers from uptown
 know the bop big brothers greasy hands rest on this belief it's our b-ball hope family is not a
 singular fixed constellation it's a strong wave that calls us home for dinner time everyone loves you
 in this treehouse called the Bronx warm and rich from roast chicken and laughter

Bulimia

sounds like a breed of flora—
the kind O'Keefe painted,
blooming only in terrible heat.

Or else Bulimia is some kind of god
going through my drawers, ashamed to find the gnarled cords,
the pad wrappers & grocery receipts. It does not understand

the concept of collecting dead things or protecting
the fruit-raw throat. The first night I brought it forth,
stars ebbed against the wall of night like ground-up bracelets,

brooding in the inedible & the collections of undiscovered colors.
Bulimia, bulimia: the daughter's breath—the changing of seasons—
the severed stem.

Femme Armor

Are red lips not a press release?
A letter written to a self and left in draft

To give-a-girl-a-look
is to sooth a sadness

Eyebrows give face
Front if needed

Femme armor
is protection from
a poisoned inheritance

We understand its weapons
Its insidious sleeper cells

But she's feeling herself.
A new pair of panties,
breaking ground

Ashley Chandanie Somwaru

Lessons from Black Bush, Guyana

when you go to mandir, don't wear red; don't
wear yellow
that parsad is only
for wedded girls
take that red dupatta off your head or you won't
get
 married
 yuh nah undastand?
make sure your hair grows to the dimples
in your back, not
an inch above
put on a dupatta, girls
not tied to men shouldn't show their hair
make sure your feet don't get swept by the coconut
broom
 you'll need to buff the floors, beat
 the curtains
 like yuh cyan hear me or wah?
make sure on Sunday mornings, you pick red carnations,
marigolds; is that a pinwheel?
those pink pinwheels
will never let you find a husband;
 dig their roots out the garden
throw them
to the sidewalk
 those who doh hear, must feel
 pray pray pray your swami doesn't
trample you
when you see his feet for the first time; bend down
place your forehead
to the ground he walks on
 take dust from his feet and rub it
 into your forehead
eh gyal, shut yuh blasted mouth, nah
cover your face with your dupatta, marrying girls
shouldn't
show their face until husbands remove the veil
 stick out your left wrist; splice in half
 using
 red thread
 your left side is now his
a whole they say
is what you are
 only when you're tied to him

with red thread
during jhandi time
go clap some roti
they need to be round and flaky
 let it burn your hands until calloused
make sure he has dhal and roti every morning
don't put too much salt
 don't put too little salt
yuh waan get two clap?
lie down and tek am
 condoms?
yuh want buss mouth?
gyam pickney gyam gyam gyam
 until your uterus is lynched from your cunt
stick it back in
 let it fall to the ground between your legs
 it doh matta
sing for da man but doh touch he drum
only he can knock am
 don't swell yuh mouth, let him do that
did you just pick up the dholak?
that's only for men
watch your fingers split open; watch them fail
to catch the
 beat
watch da man how he walks in the house
wash his feet before you
reach the stench in his mouth
 pretend you don't see the bottles
so what if he fell into the trench again?
that bottle's body is
more important than yours on the ground again
 don't give him the opportunity to grab
 your hair
 again
put on a dupatta, girls tied to men shouldn't show
their hair
you want to talk?
 swallow it
do yuh duty
wipe the blood from your cunt with your left hand;
serve
 him with your right

PLURAL: FIRE

Want is fire and overkill is fire
 Indiscriminate maiming is fire
 Desire of moisture is fire
 Chronic biopolitics are fire
 The Dakota Access Pipeline is fire
 Being targeted for injury and death is fire
 More trenchantly, surveillance is fire
 From the introduction of an institutional legacy
 A firestorm of history an inferno prediction indictment
 After we've rehearsed apocalypse we turn to the fable
 The children begin to walk in the forest
 The stirring tone of their soft voices
 Anarchists and abolitionists, ecologists and sticking points
 Sticking together, who sticks together with you?
 Now we are sweaty, vulnerable, overheated, overwrought
 There was the old woman and her oven (their ovens)
 There was major deforestation and corporations

The mirror, the cellular structure
 The minor division between matter's relation
 Molecular structure
 The Mirror Stage when the child notices
 The room is burning
 We find ourselves in a burning amphitheater
 We identify with fire
 We've loosened the boundaries between
 Self and the world
 Nerve endings extended as root symptom and root
 Know-how
 Salt in the wound, salt on fire
 Sweat as originary primordial matter
 Seas
 Crystals from outer space
 The conductive material
 Salt can extinguish small fires
 For larger fires a different climate is necessary
 Nexus, time made strange
 2.5 million acres on fire
 Burned koalas
 Burnt to death in the eucalyptus trees
 Where they sought shelter
 Forest clearing, human expansion and climate change
 Rage is fire, code red code red
 The size of the fires that are still burning
 Is difficult to fathom
 Particulate matter 2.5

I WORRY ABOUT THE WEATHER

I worry about the weather sleeping
 when I am tired eat
 when I am hungry there is no end
 to hunger when I feel rested
 wake I have many bad ideas

i wanted to be the receptionist's daughter

everything i return is stained or wrinkled
 you say it's a natural sign of wear
 but i'm reminded of the balled up receipts
 in my mother's purse
 as if everything she touched
 met a fist

tinted
 from the purple chiclets
 scented
 like the tarot lady's waiting room
 after school

tiny, gold-lined phone books
 like miniature bibles
 vandalized by headless lipsticks
 here the social worker's phone number
 here the clinic appointment
 in ink ribbons so pretty
 don't you have to be nice
 to write like that

at the doctor's office
 i wanted to be the receptionist's daughter
 maybe it was the Mickey Mouse scrubs
 or the baby photos strung across the room
 like banners like she could love anyone

my mother drags me away
 says i wasted her time it's just a cold
 hardened nails prick my flesh
 like chicken feet

sundays

the harbor is burdened land, tampered
 sea – a ripple in the
 current halts its viability.

at bay we mourn our past, balance
 tomorrow's deficiencies,
 dashes of mint dove – flurries

dissolve on brown skin, we
 peak past familiar
 banks – bush avenue, harbored

roads, our terrace borders
 the island. a subtle smile
 raises your brows,

we are confined,
 seated in a graceful dance
 between brisk breath

dissipate. observant of
 commuters – they, like us,
 stultify their journey

I Hope I Didn't Write a South Where No One

is dieting or crash-dieting
 or takes shots of seaweed
 or has allergies
 to non-allergenic foods
 or talks about pie
 instead of queerness
 or looks at domestic fowl
 & plans a meal when
 no one owns a turkey fryer
 grills in the driveway
 or attends beef festivals
 or beer cheese fairs
 where no one binges
 chess or potato pie
 & no one bourbon
 never hugging
 the porcelain like
 no one cooks in Coke
 or Sprite & sugar
 feeding in place of saying
 I saw your receipts
 no one insists
 on Pizza Fridays
 instead of phone calls
 Nacho Thursdays
 instead of therapy
 & no local rises
 to the next level
 of stupidity denying
 the beauty of tallow
 no one suffers
 white corn tortilla chip fissures
 or drinks their red
 wine cold from the box
 keeps peppered ham
 in the second freezer

or on a dry Derby Day
 cubes summer sausage
 or venison hunted
 behind the property
 where no one serves children
 the squirrel bacon
 from their classmates'
 first BB-gun kills
 or shares maternal stories
 of boar roast
 & being tricked
 to eat horse meat
 washed down with
 instant lemonade
 from a plastic pitcher
 clear with a blue lid
 no one blends
 the lemonade with buttermilk
 or finds themselves
 dining on trouble
 just because
 a mother boiled it
 in her second-best pot

Growing Stale

I eat the stale bread of old age
 nothing tangible
 like a Big Mac or Buffalo chicken wings or pabulum,
 just the taste of sore back, aching hips, arthritic thumbs...
 Is that deep-inside pain from
 an impending thrombosis, or gas?

I eat the stale bread of old age
 while a hunger for
 THE END
 grows, not in my stomach
 but in my entire being,
 this almost used-up body
 wrapped in a moldy moth-eaten coat

I eat the stale bread of old age
 and drink lots of dubious water
 as the river's edge
 creeps up to my city flat,
 creeps up toward my chin
 as I wonder Will I drown
 before I starve to death?

And yet I write of my plight,
 the never-ceasing edge of my
 nerves and my imagination
 unrelenting
 deep in my being, in my brain
 in my heart

Thoughts of an old man
 in a wet winter, eating
 the stale bread of old age...

Where I Can Rot

I was a small whore it
 was just a light hump
 I care about directness
 My vagina hole
 a baby's mouth
 As I coo I make
 the meat go rancid
 I care about clarity
 It matters to me
 when I am hated
 when some woman
 won't snug me
 Well fuck you too I
 am contained by
 the enormity of all
 I am connected to
 As I look at
 nature photography
 in an astonishingly
 expensive magazine
 about plants I
 know this to be
 the only truth
 Can I be
 where the whores
 are all protected
 where I can rot
 languidly and lavishly
 inside my desire
 where I am free
 to be the monstrosity
 of whatever I am
 Moody and egg shaped
 My wobbly and
 flaccid nature
 My mother curse
 My ailing daughter head
 My stunning hubris
 Oh
 It feels good
 I don't know
 Yes

all over, but only here

girl in a town up to its wrists in water
girl in a town inventing a fix for the drowning

it's called leaving

in a town that runs from itself—girl coming upon woman
and water entering, come upon yourself

+

the man pays you a visit

it is all self-serving. you need the leaving to meet you.
he grabs your wrist and admires the slim of it, the soft.

says, "it feels like this
all over, doesn't it?"

he means the soft. you swerve and miss the actual.
pretend he means the drowning. so yea. yea.

all over, but only here. you say what you can't know.

he thinks you are made of something he needs so he smiles
though he doesn't feel it. you don't love him at all, really,

just the elsewhere he brings you.

you touch him sometimes, pretend you are sorry and without footing.
he doesn't even feel it for what it is.

you think: we could drown and we wouldn't even fill.

+

you can give a body what it says it wants and if it doesn't know
that's what it's getting it can refuse to sink or float.

can refuse to receive. can hang its mouth waiting to drink
when it's already drowning.

Austerity Measures

Your rabbit was the first to go

and as we watched it starve
we sat in awe
of how easy it was to let a thing die—

no pain in it, just a muted jerk

like extracting a child's molar
from her anesthetized jaw.

You went next, and it took longer, but still

I felt no pain—
only pins and needles and

you hopped up in my arms, blitzed,
no sense in us—just skin

and bones,

burnt spoons

and numb lips,

our last kiss dumb as a mouth-

ful of fur.

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