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KRESGE, DUHITA CORI

isn't devotion

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Gold

I could tell you a story about the call to obey
the sexual rites of purification, the red oil
poured from crown to pussy, the incense

nipples, smoking nag champa, the girl on girl
hair braiding circles, singing breathy microtonal
hiss, the scraping of sacred cum from our bellies,

the straddling of shrines, I could tell you many
stories of violent fits and spermicide and
secret gatherings of a confusion so deep

and so fucked it was mensiatric,
of feisty hollowness that transform into threats
just as you drift unconscious I could put my hand over

isn't devotion

your mouth and show you a sky with the moon
dragged down to a black-lit love cave,
but nothing like that ever happened to me,

which seems almost a shame since
I would have made an excellent concubine,
don't you agree that would have been

the story you were hoping for
it is a known fact that any woman
such stories is crazy lying, digging for gold.

Duhita Cori Kresge

Gold

I could tell you a story about the call to obey
the sexual rites of purification, the red oil
poured from crown to pussy, the incense

nipples, smoking nag champa, the girl on girl
hair braiding circles, singing breathy microtonal
bliss, the scraping of sacred cum from our bellies,

the straddling of shrines, I could tell you many
stories of violent fits and spermicide and
secret gatherings of a confusion so deep

and so fucked it was messianic,
of foamy lullabies that transform into threats
just as you drift unconscious I could put my hand over

your mouth and show you a sky with the moon
dragged down to a black-lit love cave,
but nothing like that ever happened to me,

which seems almost a shame since
I would have made an excellent concubine,
don't you agree that would have been

the story you were hoping for, although
it is a known fact that any woman who tells
such stories is crazy, lying, digging for gold.

Inversion

I never left the cult
the Gods
rescued me and kept
me in their closet of silks

the sound of little ankle bells
every night my eyes
are honeyed shut
flowers for breakfast

flowers for lunch
no dinner
I throw up flowers
my world is beautiful

my Lord has paid
for my isolation
I am exempt from taxes
I am princess

Aurora with an arrow
through the head
breathe in peace
breathe out desire

I never needed
a career consultation
breathe in love
breathe out my ugly inversion

my unworn body
gently moth eaten
I am a perfect
stranger

Chosen

We gave up aging like an obscene habit.

Our old names were best forgotten inside our smallest wooden nesting dolls.

We had pleasant secrets

fed to us like cubes of sugar from a cosmic pocket:

Shahana had been a giraffe. Obvious really, when you look at the jaw.

Sudhira had once been Japanese. Dipika had a tall pink aura.

Govinda was perhaps the most beautiful with long curls and small white teeth.

Her disobedience was in the distant past.

Those who did not believe were discreet. They left quietly.

We all took turns washing fruit.

As payment we got snacks at midday, cakes on birthdays—

yards of silks in the bright shades our souls were rumored to prefer.

Our hair, down to our waists,

we were the standard of purity.

Whenever an incoming
DISOBEDIENCE/DOUBT/DESIRE,
we would scream the conquering spell
to get the poison out.
It would leave our bodies
in black curlicues.
We scrubbed our insides of demon
seven times a day.
Scrubbed and scrubbed.

Chosen

We were accustomed to standing for hours in any weather.
In winter we sang to our blue hands
frosting the bulletproof glass of our Lord with feminine breath.
We released songs in swarms— such slippery, delicate creatures.
Clumps of purple wisteria heavy all around us.
Their perfume like a deep sleep.
At night we watched sitcoms sprawling on the shag carpet.
It was someone's full-time job to edit out the kissing scenes.
Someone else had the job of calorie counting.
We all took turns washing fruit.
As payment we got snacks at midday, cakes on birthdays—
yards of silks in the bright shades our souls were rumored to prefer.
Our hair, down to our waists.
We were the standard of purity.

*

We wanted more fire more flame more light more light more detonation.

God's Tongue

Matte sky blue smeared
A color you could enter
I did this daily the color of consciousness most diluted
looking into the baby mouth of God
My mother claimed she saw her reflection
heaving over the toilet
the face of the Terrible God
sitting over her own face
We all saw things through the opaque filter of our faith
The sky crept its way into the walls, the carpet, the cradle, the
barbed wire
intense, obsessive, suffocating baby blue

If you had given me a blue tongue I would have eaten it

Whenever an incoming

impure thought
we quickly seared it
straight to the grubby second liver
stomach brain
dirty survival and bad fun are born running
we were made to be shining examples
haunting songs
sublimely tight
we were shot from heaven
a squadron of blossoms
losing our minds
throwing them in the fire

Chosen

What can I really tell you about us? We were unknowable.

We didn't really know each other but we watched each other
for signs of restlessness.

God's Tongue

Matte sky blue smeared across everything that belonged to Him

A color you could enter like sky

I did this daily the color of consciousness most dilated

looking into the baby mouth of God

My mother claimed she saw her reflection

heaving over the toilet

the face of the Terrible Goddess

taking over her own face

We all saw things through the opaque filter of our faith

The sky crept its way into the walls, the carpet, the candle flames, the gravel, the
barbed wire

intense, obsessive, suffocating baby blue

If you had given me a blue lotus I would have eaten it

Hush

I loved my sweet Lord like a child mother.
Every pock mark on your face,
the saffron honey of your voice,
your way of saying *obstacle*.

My sweet Lord,
that you breathed and belched and cracked
jokes daily was nothing
short of miraculous.

In your white leather recliner,
wiggling a restless foot,
you were always cheating on your diet.
Your cough was wet.
You suffered arthritis for our sins.

My humility was winning awards
until one day, my Lord,
I came to you with bruises of doubt.
I showed you hoping it would make us closer.

You looked at me sideways,
placing a finger on your lips—
the glitter of your eyes
just leaking through their slits.

It wasn't long after that
my euphoria tap went dry.
No more creeping lilies in my bed.

On the map of heaven
we were drafting together
I tried to claim my territory.

There were thousands of us
mumbling our surrender to you
and no one meant it more than me.
What would you have me drink?

Dubita

I was beautiful
God's blue glow in my cheeks
My eyes like yours
I wore marigold
Garlands heavy and real
So beautiful I could barely move
So afraid my purity would
Get keyed in the outside world
There were demons in the high
Corners of movie theaters, government
Buildings, even churches
Giant silverfish skeletons
Living off the dead skin, hair, and anguish
Of normal people
Lesser people
I had a smelly-rose-white-bleeding-to-
Death of beauty
Love
The tears would lift from the rose
Clothed in my heart
I could never control which eye
The fine lacquer lines making
My mouth, my fingertips
I subscribed their altar
At the rate I was developing
I was dangerous
They couldn't keep me
I would have to be exiled
No one fought this
Never was I more beautiful
Weeping in the middle of the street
I hadn't eaten in a month
The day I was banished
You look so beautiful
They said
Leave now

Whenever an incoming

call is unknown

it is you

calling to tell me

what I deserve

but you hang up

a man is a God

as long as he

never apologizes

for anything

His voice is

Ornate / Half growl

A cave

A pack of dogs / Honey pendulum / A vibrating eye

Dove meat

Twisted cane / Hitting the glass

Thinking sky / Fever for gold

Fuchsia buds / Twinkling / In pain

On the step of heaven
we were drafting together
I tried to claim my territory.

There were thousands of us
mumbling our surrender to you
and no one meant it more than me.
What would you have me drink?

Duhita

I was beautiful
God's blue glow in my cheeks
My eyes like veal
I wore marigold
Garlands heavy and real
So beautiful I could barely move
So afraid my purity would
Get keyed In the outside world
There were demons in the high dark
Corners of movie theaters, government
Buildings, even churches
Giant silverfish phantoms
Living off the dead skin, hair, and anguish
Of normal people
Lesser people
I had a smelling-roses-while-bleeding-to-
Death kind of beauty
In love
The tears would lift from the rose
Clothed in my heart
I could even control which eye
The fine lacquer lines seeking
My mouth, my fingertips
I reabsorbed their elixir
At the rate I was developing
I was dangerous
They couldn't keep me
I would have to be exiled
No one fought this
Never was I more beautiful
Weeping in the middle of the street
I hadn't eaten in a month
The day I was banished
You look so beautiful
They said
Leave now

Chosen

When God wants to gets rid of you
He doesn't do it Himself
He sends His secretary
she takes you down

into a walk-in freezer
you sit on a white plastic bucket
there are shelves

with gallon jars of rose syrup
mango pickle frozen
cream cheese in bulk

you are tied down by your dress six yards
of imitation silk with floral print snakes
around you getting tighter

the secretary stands close and holds a knife
shaped like a note and a picture of Him
in front of your face and the knife goes slowly

slowly into your ribs until
it's all the way in
and she says He told me to tell you

He loves you He loves you and He wants you
to carry His love with you far
far away and you say but this will kill me

I will die and you
give the knife back
and God's secretary says nothing

*

The last time I saw him I was so coked up I must have done \$50 in the bathroom. I
was going to ride my own float with my own choir songs with no feeling whatsoever.
I was high beyond reach. After that my name was poison.

Drama Rama

I am the teen saint of the totally obsessed

there is a song about me

my name is daughter

it means she who was born on earth but

has no idea how to survive it

I am worshipped for being naive

I hate making my bed

my dad is so embarrassing

I criticize his form his prayer hands
are too high

some bliss is so fake sometimes

but I am suffering

from this new woman body

I now have little breasts and my thighs rub
together

it's excruciating to shower

everyday I am tested

I think I just had my first orgasm

while drawing the om sign on my clit

sex is mysterious

metallic like death like autumn like natural
disasters are divine will

sex is low

I lower

I dream of a girl's mouth on me
of mouth sex

today I will wear all white and not talk to anyone

I love knowing that I will always be a virgin

I will die a virgin

if I am ever not a virgin I will die

"Where is my romanticism?"

- I used to believe I liked winter
- I used to like milk chocolate
- You can judge people by their chocolate
- I believe in psychic powers
- I have psychic powers
- I can't stand people who astral project
- I don't believe in karma
- I never believed in karma
- I believe in guilt
- Guilt is real
- There is such a thing as Jewish guilt
- There is such a thing as Catholic guilt
- The other guilts are real too
- I miss drugs sometimes
- My children will never touch a drug
- I will never have children
- Doubt makes me feel light
- I used to think doubt was devil whispers
- Doubt is really just ok
- Once you start doubting you can't stop
- I have never played Candy Crush
- I like crushing things
- I suspect all beauty is self serving
- I have stopped questioning love
- I believe in mistakes
- I would probably love Candy Crush
- I probably existed before
- I don't believe in reincarnation
- A lot of people believe Judy Garland and I have the same soul
- My Grandma loved Judy

*10/13/2007

The day I found out my guru had died I was standing by a wall of glass looking at the trees in October and my face was white and flat and wavy the air was pure and minimal and the hall was echoey and everyone in it was far away and later I was in a car with Adam and I put my feet on the dash and I shocked us both with a deep purple violent sob and gasp a black crow scraping its belly across the sky as it flew out of me—

it was the only one I had been saving all these years aging inside.

"Where is my romanticism?"

- I used to believe I'll find winter
- I used to believe I'll find love
- The day I found out my guru had died I was standing in front of a tree in October and my face was white and fat and wet and I was crying and the trees in October and my face was white and fat and wet and I was crying and the trees in October and my face was white and fat and wet and I was crying
- I believe in guilt
- Guilt is real
- There is such a thing as Jewish guilt
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- My Grandma loved Judy

Sometimes I still wake up
to the sound of angels
driving away

*

I looked

as thin as
a
tea cup
and
Ranjana
slipped her arm
around
my
waist
said quickly
in my ear
spitting a little
here
you know you are very brave coming back
Her
scent of rose,
absolute.

Spare me

I remember the color
therapist told me orange
would help me feel
less blob
more contrast
I am so naive
people think I am poised
I put positive labels
on my water bottle
I'm just an advocate
for self improvement
I have my private
practice of collapsing
it's organic
it starts in my throat
a soft crumpling
brings me eventually
all the way
into my power
to heal you by painting
aphorisms
just above the crest
of your wound
with my eyelashes
I am so naive sometimes
I heal you
I take forever
death is going to be an epiphany
I change my name to Epiphany
when I bake cookies
I place them in the sleeping
hands of drunks
ancestry testing told me
I am only half here/
half mother-of-pearl
in every other universe I am dead
damn I forget the

meditation for rebirth
the stained glass is lit
I would like to
lick
that
angel face
it's just too far
I guess
hotel art
is haunting
what was that
invocation
cynosure
cyberchase
cymbaline
cymbalta
throat of darkness
throat of light
throat with a precious door
and real working bell
I dreamed of children
dressed like mice
taken up to heaven
by mistake
I was one of them
throat of holy cow
that bends and bends
throat without end
handmade in Peru
the ayurvedic doctor
heard a muffled cry
in my pulse
she told me
my throat was
especially vulnerable
throat born
of desire
to please

Spare me

I remember the color
therapist told me orange
would help me feel
less bleak
more contrast
I am so naive
people think I am poised
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Whenever an incoming

twin
we fight to the death
she speaks in tongues
she gets in my head
and breathes in reverse
I cut the fluttering
lids from her
soulful eyes to wear
as my jewelry
she rams my face
shattering the mirror
why am I so dizzy
pay no attention to
the thing I drag behind me
she and I
look nothing alike

Menthol

In the movie version I am bald
shaving my head for cash
I dazzle in lime jelly heels
smokey eye on a windy hilltop
I do battle with an arrogant Buddha
a fight-dance in the bamboo
I am your father— his dying words
as I scrub his name from the credits
because I am not just another
child actress the world has raised
and devoured like I once downed
the entire bottle
I give too much
devotion
what does it feel like
a father's kiss
it will be a long time
before I wear sensible shoes

old flame

the trouble is
I'm not even
angry
just destroyed
in a way that one
is sad when they lose
a little soul
or imaginary friend
and in a funny way
I still choose
the spirit world I still
light candles and let
my heart feel the odd
recognition when I look
at the crowd
the dark
the candle like looking
in a mirror my old
flame I am not
even angry

isn't devotion

an old aunt, kissing the card deck of saints and slapping them down one by one
isn't devotion
a box of pressed daisies to be rifled through
isn't devotion
the moon when you've got her by the ankle
isn't devotion
pretty when kneeling
isn't devotion
grim love
isn't devotion
smelling roses while bleeding to death
isn't devotion
a necklace as heavy as the Brass Hand of God
isn't devotion
drinking a tin of flammable blue jelly

Postscript

the last Bengali word I forgot
was *bandhu*

friend

how many times have I wanted to call to say

I went through all of this
to become a citizen
suffered so many beliefs

my God
we had a deal

and you were supposed
to punish me eternally but

you wouldn't believe how good my life is

I have my own following now

staring into the crowd
I cracked my head
on Nirvana

I wanted to create a door
that all can come and go through

showing how easy it is
to leave and come back

tides tugging a toy moon
like a yo-yo

I don't miss the heavenly music

I miss how the music was
so heavenly we had to hold each other up

when I am really alone I still sing

I like to feel the old words
losing more and more

of what I thought they meant

ARCHIVE, a series of four chapbooks published in 2019-2020

Stated Models by Meher Manda

Hearings by Tyler Morse

Isn't Devotion by Dubita Cori Kresge

Sort of Cups by Rei

Each of the poets approached the series concept by culling from personal or institutional archives. Together, these texts create a library of archival experiences.

No, Dear and Small Anchor Press are based in Brooklyn. More information about their projects and publications can be found at nodreammagazine.com.

The cover image is by Patrick Delaney.

This chapbook was printed in 2019 in an edition of 100.

this is copy 54 of 100.

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was bhanda

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