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EVERYDAY COLONIALISM AND HOGG BOOK

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Writing

by

Hiroki Michael Araki-Kawaguchi (Kiik)

Committee in charge:

Professor Cristina Rivera Garza, Chair  
Professor Michael Davidson  
Professor Ben Doller  
Professor K. Wayne Yang

2014



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University of California, San Diego

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

EVERYDAY COLONIALISM

by

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Master of Fine Arts in Writing

University of California, San Diego

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These micro-fictions are sort of counter-internment stories that are looking to probe some of the unconscious elements of the internment experience. These stories (or some of them merely encounters) are attempting to move against internment narratives that represent Japanese internees as tragic, victimized, or disempowered people. These stories reach for complex personhood, characters with complex flaws, strengths, and desires.

## **EVERYDAY COLONIALISM**

Poor as you are, my heart, don't grieve here on earth

## **an impression**

Yoshikane Araki did all he could to temper his desire for the tower guard, but the evening song of the tower guard continued to pierce his dreams, and once inside surged like the ghost-pollen of creosote poppies, and in the morning he awoke mouthing those bewildering words, tongue slack with ghost-breath, a rawness, soreness, an impression the tower guard's mouth had been all night pinned atop Kane's.

## **a small fortune**

At the age of sixteen, Margaret Morri traded away a small fortune for a conch of unrivaled size and brilliance, a spire wound tightly enough to pierce flesh, shelltop the color of whipped milk, a massive lip brimming with remnants of sea dander, calcium foam, wet sand, salt bath, and for the evenings that followed she could be observed whispering into its mouth, sharpening its spurs, and on one occasion washing and polishing the conch clean with her hair. Sixty years later Aiko Morri was cleaning her mother's mantle when the conch fell to the floor and burst, revealing a ringlet of hair and a tightly folded letter from Margaret's teenage lover Elena Okubo, and although the surface of the conch had bleached, its hull worn fragile over the years, it'd preserved the ink of every word in the letter, and though the years had stolen all of Margaret's hair, the fragment of Elena's hair was still richly black and smelled fresh as the blossoms of whitethorn acacia.

## **palo verde, prairie broomweed**

Yoshikane Araki was the name Margaret Morri gave to her pet mouse, a creature of shocked white fur and thin cloak of gray, and she made his home in a discarded hatbox, furnishing it with alluvial soil, the crowns of palo verde, the slinky blooms of prickly poppy, and she fed him, groomed him, and exchanged daily troubles with him until the age of nine, when she introduced Yoshikane Araki to her boyfriend Jack Maeda, who exclaimed that her ugly mouse was just some string and some buttons, nothing better than an old, busted doll.

Following that incident, Yoshikane Araki remained sealed up in Margaret's hatbox for over sixty years, and was transported from Gila to Chicago to Detroit and finally to California, until one evening Margaret's granddaughter, Sue Maeda knocked the hatbox from a shelf and Yoshikane Araki tumbled out.

- Who is that? Sue asked Margaret.
- Why, that is Yoshikane Araki of course. He is my pet mouse.
- What does he like to eat?

And though it had been sixty years since Margaret had fed Kane, she knew instantly, absolutely his favorite things to eat were the seeds of mesquite, creosote bush and prairie broomweed, precisely the plants that grew wild in her yard.

## **whiskey over barbed wire**

The doctor told Kane Araki it happened that sometimes, in extreme circumstances of weather or diet, a Japanese man or woman might spontaneously sprout a set of wings. He had heard of three or four cases from his colleagues in Japan. A woman from west Osaka had saved her village from drought when she'd seeded, by hand, the clouds with silver iodide and pellets of dry carbon dioxide. A man from Kumamoto, that had eaten nothing but sweet potatoes for five years, awoke with wings and began supplementing his diet with tall-hanging fruit and birds' eggs. Research was being gathered, but what with the war, frivolous projects like these were shelved for greater concerns. The doctor was unsure what could have triggered such a large, severe pair of wings amidst Arizona desert. An allergic reaction? Had Kane been eating a lot of unshelled peanuts lately? Too many uncooked radishes?

In any case the doctor told Kane not to worry. He would contact a surgeon the next day and arrange to have the wings removed sometime in the following months. It would be costly to fly an anesthesiologist to camp during wartime. But reserve funding existed precisely for these types of situations. In the meantime it was important for Kane to push hot clear fluids. To pick his plumes clean of burs and mites. And to take an aspirin at night to dull any discomfort. The doctor handed Kane a tiny glass bottle of tablets and gave his wings a little pat.

Although they were mostly an inconvenience, Kane found his new appendages did afford him a unique opportunity. Because his feathers were a raven's black, flight after dusk was nearly undetectable. When the wind favored him he was over the fence and into the nearest Chinatown in under an hour. There he could walk freely through the streets, in restaurants, in shops. He was guarded from police that couldn't comprehend the differences between their local foul chicken-coop Chinamen and the sinister yellow-menace Japs being battled abroad. On the one occasion he'd been stopped by a policeman for jaywalking, he eluded

capture by asserting a disoriented Chinese gibberish. In Chinatown he could buy whiskey and cigarettes to share back at camp. Kane, who had never garnered much consideration, was everyday meeting new friends that stuffed bills and whiskey orders into his shirt pockets. Pretty girls that'd once ignored him now covered him with their pity. Some stroked his ugly wings tenderly and promised to knit them a decorative covering.

In a matter of weeks Kane was hauling fifteen or twenty liters of whiskey over the barbed wire each night. The bottles were padded by newspaper and tied into a burlap sack that he slung like an unconscious companion across his shoulders. The generous blackness of their desert nights was a blessing since he was diving in lower, wearier each trip. Parties now resumed on the inside. Legitimate parties with whiskey punch and couples becoming mated over dreamy, affectionate dancing. In no time Kane found himself engaged to a lovely girl called Margaret Morri, and plans were quickly drawn for acquiring her a wedding dress.

Kane was content to pay for an expensive dress. He'd come into plenty of money performing whiskey and cigarette exchanges. It now appeared his savings had found their purpose. An old Sears catalog was discovered, and Margaret devoted her afternoons to preening Kane's wings while their eyes moved over its pages. Eventually Margaret settled on a dress that was priced at just over a hundred dollars. The snipped photograph along with her measurements were delivered to a local dressmaker who promised he could have the dress ready in ten days.

The conflict arose when a watchtower guard, a man by the name of Wilbur, paid a visit to Kane at his family's barrack just days before he was to retrieve Margaret's dress. The camp guards were no dummies, Wilbur told Kane. They'd known all along whiskey was finding its way into camp. A popular guy like Kaneshiro Araki – a popular guy that had found himself with a slick pair of flyers – was obviously going to head their list of suspects.

Still the guards didn't have any desire to be hard asses about it. No need to punish anyone retroactively. Among these circumstances who could blame them? Wilbur would've done the same if it'd been his own kind. But while a bottle every so often was clean, American fun – twenty or thirty liters of whiskey each night, at a profit, was called bootlegging. A report could make Wilbur and some of his fellow officers look foolish. And he wasn't going to be made a fool before a Jap or two got his knuckles rapped upon. Wilbur said he'd cut a deal. He'd been informed Kane's surgery was schedule for the following month. As long as he kept those wings tied up until then – he didn't see a further need for investigations.

Kane didn't have reason to disrespect the guard's warning. It'd been civil for Wilbur to approach him the way he did. So he announced that the flight to retrieve Margaret's wedding dress would be his last. He was tired anyhow of buying everyone's liquor while taking all the risk. Relatives, friends of his parents, neighbors pressed him to reconsider. Think about your wedding, they said. Don't you want champagne and whiskey for your wedding party? Remember all of the money you're making. A man that is starting a family must be pretty pig-headed not to have to consider it. But Kane remained unwavering in his decision.

People shook their heads as they handed him their final whiskey and cigarette orders. Demands poured in. Most everyone asked for twice the usual amount. Kane figured he would have to carry everything in three, maybe four sacks. Two could be tied to his back. One cradled to his chest. And another he'd have to hold in his hands. The thought of this labor made him thankful it would be his final excursion.

There are several versions of what happened to Kane as he returned that last evening. One version says the bag holding Margaret's dress tore from the weight of too many whiskey bottles. And when the guards caught sight of the ghostly fabric hovering over the fence they fired upon it. In another version Kane attempted to maneuver in over the fence too low. And as he did the sacks caught and split against the barbs. Their cargo rattled the metal wires and alerted the



guards who fired upon him. But in the most popular version of the story, Wilbur demanded Kane's wings be painted white. And though he'd piloted his way out from camp disguised under a black cloak, there was a divine wind that disrobed him upon his return. That was when Wilbur and the other guards saw and fired upon him.

Kane Araki wasn't killed that night however. He suffered wounds to his hands, shoulders, groin, knees, calves. An emergency operation was performed that resulted in the removal of his wings. He awoke nine days later to find his right arm had also been amputated. After the war Kane returned to California. It was there he heard that Margaret had become engaged to someone else. Someone called Shimmy or Jack or Lawson.

## **dissolving newspaper, fermenting leaves**

To persuade her cricket to eat, Margaret Morri cooked every recipe she'd learned as a teenager when working for the Ichikawa family restaurant. As the rest of the Morri family barrack slept, Margaret slipped into the camp's mess hall and raided its pantries. She minced pork, garlic, ginger, green onion. She arranged dumplings in a pan and ladled hot oil over them until the dough of their skins became tan and chewy. She boiled fistfuls of buckwheat noodles, plunged them into ice baths, and spun the strands into shallow cups. She caramelized sweet onions and doused meatballs of beef tongue in rice wine and vinegar. She uncloaked the pits of umeboshi plums and rolled the sweet, puckered flesh into sheets of salted and dried seaweed.

Everything she held out to her cricket and begged him to eat. But he stared at her dishes impassively, stroked the ends of his antennae, and turned his face away from hers in disappointment. On the mornings Margaret was not attentive to the aesthetics of her offering, her cricket was known to wiggle his mandibles in disgust, or to emit a sharp, pompous click from the toothcomb tucked beneath his wings.

At the camp library there was a single text containing a passage about the lives of crickets. That text was entitled, *World of Insects: Grasshoppers and Katydid*s, and if Gila River's resident entomologist had cared to check its record, they would've seen it had been signed out by an M. Morri a total of twenty-eight times. Based upon her research, Margaret assembled woodcrates of dissolving newspaper, fermenting leaves, ripe pods of fungi, and delivered them to the burrow of her cricket. Her cricket approached a decomposing leaf, sniffed at it, bristled, and leapt away. From her oldest uncle, Margaret learned that it was common practice for crickets to cannibalize the wounded. On one occasion she tore the hind legs from a desert locust and presented them to her cricket, who instantly recoiled, let loose a series of heated chirps, and would not appear to her for several days afterward.

Though her arms became branded by inadvertent flares of hot grease and steam, though her olfactory nerves grew tired and raw, though her eyes clouded from lack of sleep, Margaret continued to dribble hot oil onto chicken skin until it curled into a sail of sweetened fat. Margaret steamed custards of tofu, ponzu, green onion and whipped eggs in teacups. Her hands clapped pots of white rice into steaming wedges and garnished their peaks with tart strips of shoga. And if her rice balls were finished before the sun had risen, she transferred them over to an open fire, toasted them, lowered them into a ceramic bowl, and splashed over them a broth made from kombu and flakes of bonito dashi.

Still, Margaret Morri's cricket would not eat.

– You must eat, she said.

But her cricket merely barked his wings at her, pronounced a fierce, staccato snort.

– If you will not eat what I cook for you, then what will you eat? she asked.

– Her cricket said, there is just one thing I can eat.

– Yes, anything, Margaret pleaded. I will make you anything.

– Her cricket said, when you lie down to sleep tonight, place me beside your left ear. We will find each other in your dreams, and I will be able to eat there.

That night when Margaret went down upon her bedroll, she did as her cricket had instructed. She placed her cricket in a little nest of hair beside her left ear and was quickly overtaken by the blackness of sleep. During the first months inside the fences of the Gila Relocation Center, Margaret's dreams would transport her back to her family's home in Venice, California. But in the past two years, all Margaret's dreams had been pulled as though by a tether back to Gila. On that occasion, when she came into awareness, she found herself sitting in the darkness of the Morri family barracks. Then she saw her cricket had assumed the form of a man. She was positive this man was her cricket because his voice had not changed. He was vaguely humming a song and cleaning his teeth with a wooden splinter. As a man her cricket was slightly reminiscent of the local minister from the Venice Methodist

Church, the Reverend Jun Ishimoto. He was lean and immaculate, hair and fingers well-manicured, and something of his smile seemed slightly misaligned, as though his mouth was overly-crowded with teeth.

– Now that you are here, I will cook you anything you want, Margaret told him. We aren't bound to what I can steal from the canteen and the mess hall anymore. I can find you the most expensive, most marbled cuts of meat. Matsutake mushrooms. Magnificent quail eggs. Or perhaps you're thirsty. Here you can drink a dozen foaming beers.

– Her cricket-man said, I have not come here to eat anything you can cook. The only thing I will eat is your mother.

– My mother! Margaret exclaimed.

– Do not be frightened Margaret, her cricket-man said. No harm will come to your actual mother. I only want to eat the mother of this world. The mother of this dream. That is all I want.

– But my mother! Margaret said. I do not think I could allow such a desecration of my family. Even if it is only a dream.

– Margaret, since pledging myself to you, there has only been starvation, her cricket-man said. Many times I thought, surely today will be the one I die from hunger. But I always reserved faith that one day you would find a way to feed me the thing I needed.

Margaret began to wonder if she was behaving ridiculously. She looked down at her dream-mother. Who was this woman actually? What was this woman?

– Well I suppose if I didn't have to watch, it could be alright, Margaret said. I suppose she doesn't have actual feelings. She isn't my flesh-and-blood mother after all.

– I knew you would be the one to save me, her cricket-man said. I knew I could count on you to understand. Then he scooped Margaret's dream-mother up in a blanket and carried her behind one of barrack's partitions. Margaret could hear the two of them struggling. She had the urge to go to them, to mediate the horror

of this attack in some way, but her legs felt stricken with paralysis.

– Margaret! she could hear her mother screaming. I can't get him off of me! Stop him!

The next morning, eating breakfast shoulder to shoulder with the members of her family, Margaret felt tormented with guilt. She feigned sickness and went back to their barrack to lie down. It went on in this way for weeks. Every evening Margaret would place her cricket beside her left ear, and every night her cricket would transform into a man, and ask to devour another member of the Morri family. The morning that followed, Margaret would be overtaken by guilt and avoid meals, chores, conversation with her family. It wasn't just guilt and exhaustion that worried her. Margaret was having other difficulties during her waking hours. She found she sometimes had difficulties recalling the names of her cousins and siblings. She found herself having to relearn their habits, sensitivities, alliances, when they preferred to rise and sleep, which jokes might hurt them and which might make them laugh, which friends they loved or despised in secret. On her worst days, she had difficulty recognizing her family, as though their faces, gestures, voices had metamorphosed into something foreign during the night. As this became a regular occurrence, Margaret felt compelled to confront her cricket.

– Count all the members of your family, the cricket told her. And strike me dead if even one of them is missing.

– Of course they haven't gone, Margaret said. But it's not the point. I'm having trouble remembering them. Yesterday I tried to call out to Tetsuo, but I'd forgotten what to call him. I'd forgotten my own brother's name!

– Your brother is a rotten brat anyway, the cricket said. I ate him mostly out of sympathy. In truth, his flesh tasted of ash and rat shit.

– Margaret was shocked. Save your sympathy then, she told her cricket-man. I'll never let you touch another person in my family again.

– If you no longer want me to eat your dream-family, the cricket said, then perhaps you will let me nibble on your toes.

– I cannot let you do that, Margaret said.

– Margaret, the cricket said, you are being ridiculous. They are only your dream toes. I will count them beside you when you awaken every morning. They will be right where you left them.

It was soon after that Margaret found she had trouble walking. When family members noticed her limp, she had to make up an excuse about tripping off the steps of the canteen's loading dock and spraining her ankle. Margaret had always been expert in needlepoint, but discovered her hands needed to be re-taught every elementary rhythm and motion. In the mornings she counted all her digits and toes beside the cricket. Everything was accounted for, but it was as though no blood or oxygen had reached them during the night. Those parts of her she dreamed he'd feasted upon were all shot through with tingles and dull aches.

– You haven't been eating my dreams at all, she said to the cricket one evening.

– Never once have I deceived you Margaret Morri, he said. Tally all your fingers, toes and limbs. Count all the members of your family. Everything remains here in this room.

– This is not the room you have been stealing from, she said.

– When you first came to me, the cricket said, I told you there would be consequences for our friendship. The union between a woman and her cricket is not one that can be sustained through the typical channels.

– I knew something of my life would change, Margaret said. I asked for you to change it. But I did not say I was surrendering my family or my body.

– Never have I asked you to betray your blood family, Margaret. Never have I asked for one ounce of physical flesh or blood.

– Just because what you take cannot be tied to a specific weight, does not mean you've taken nothing. It does not mean you have permission to measure its value to me.

– The cricket screamed back at her. What I need to survive you create every

night in abundance! What would you have me do? Would you have me starve, Margaret?

– I would have the both of us try to survive another way, she said.

– The cricket grew very still. Then he said, what you say is right, Margaret. You are right and you've always treated me with kindness and understanding. Tonight will be the last night I visit your dreams. I will not eat from your dream-body, nor will not eat from your dream-family. But allow me visit you one world over, so that I might say goodbye to you as a man.

– That night, when the cricket-man came to her, he said, Margaret, you have fed me all I have asked for. And you have suffered incalculable losses because of it. There can be no small repayment for a gift as that.

– The cricket-man ran his fingers down surface of the wall. When he opened his hand he was shaking out a fist of sawdust. Tonight, he said, I will eat this barrack that imprisons you. I will chew back its planks of wood. I will chew back the fences of barbed wire. I will eat the rifles and the shells of the tower guards. I will eat the sand and the heat and the miles between here and the Western coast.

– Margaret said to the cricket-man, I won't pretend a thing more with you. This is just the dream of one woman. The same world will be rebuilt the moment I awaken.

– No, Margaret, the cricket-man said, Not for you. Not this time. When you awaken, Gila River will be gone. And you will be back in California. Back in your home in Venice.

Margaret tried to rise, but found in her dream, she had no feet or legs. She looked up at her cricket-man from the cold barrack floor.

– Margaret, the cricket-man said, you knew at the moment of friendship between a beautiful woman and a cricket, there is always a firm possibility for magic.

And then cricket-man rose, gripped the rafters, and began to tear down the planks of the Morri family barrack.

## **oxlip and pearl**

Michael Araki, the eldest child and only son of Margaret Morri and Yoshikane Araki, was conceived years before their legal marriage, in the southeastern block of Gila River during the month of oxlip and pearl. Mud poured from the chutes of barracks and froze from the outer rafters in blackened stalactites. Behind neighborhood barracks, under threat of that violence, Margaret and Kane stripped nude as calves and engaged in night after night of doomed, clandestine, teenage fucking. The stalactites rocked, hummed against their moans, glinted as they collected the ghost-steam of their breath, and threatened to spear them through. Overhead the tower guards could be heard patting their rifles, mumbling to their bullets. Still, Kane and Margaret gladly returned. They lived with their families in partitioned barracks that were shared with two or three other families, and were rarely granted time to be alone together.

Through her pregnancy Margaret craved fried meat. Because red meat was tightly rationed in camp, Kane found a way to blue-plate diners in Casa Grande. In the mornings he hid behind racks in darkened trailers of bread and vegetable trucks. The freight trucks left camp, pulled into Casa Grande to load their cargo, and that was the moment Kane would slip away, locate a diner, purchase hamburgers and hotdogs wrapped in yellow paper, and then squeeze back into the trucks for the long, cramped trip back into camp.

Kane was secretly carted around in bread trucks for sixth months. The evenings were reserved for singing. Kane's brothers Dennis and Shimmy played guitar and ukulele. Friends and family gathered in the southeast block's mess hall and projected song after song toward Margaret's pregnant belly. Kane and Margaret were the first newly-pregnant couple in Gila, and the excitement of the Araki-Morri child vibrated through the teenage generation like radio current.

The morning of the snake was only two weeks before Margaret's due date. Kane and Margaret were walking in the camp gardens amid high grass, when Kane



saw Margaret go under like a stalk of wheat cut at the ground. Margaret made no sound. Kane opened his mouth but all his voice rushed beyond his teeth and lips. He choked on his silence and ran. Kane never found the snake, merely two holes at Margaret's ankle running with blood.

The venom did not kill Margaret. She spent two weeks in the infirmary, during which she miscarried. Kane recovered the small, stillborn body of Michael Araki and carried him out of camp. On a pyre of mesquite and desert willow, Kane burned the tiny body and buried what the wind would not take. After Gila River, in the decades that followed, Margaret and Kane Morri had three daughters, all three of which claimed to share recurring dreams where they could hear singing and smell hot desert wind.

## **a white man**

Yoshikane Araki was the Gila internee most commonly mistaken for a white man. It was not that Kane had any sort of skin condition. He wasn't freakishly tall nor was his face exceptionally thin or pointed. But there was something contained within his posture, his broad, consummate musculature. He represented something more capable, self-aware, more distinguished than the average Japanese-American occupant. At least, those were the common descriptors. The way military guards and other interned white men of Gila River explained away their overestimation of him. Upon learning he was of full-blooded Japanese descent, these men would slap a palm to their forehead, or place one to their slack mouths in apology for their astonishment.

– It's only you don't look like the other Japanese men we've met, they would say. And you seem so confident and dignified, Kane. And your eyes just seem so big!

Newly stationed tower guards or military police in Gila River, customarily pulled Kane aside to have him point out the gorgeous Japanese woman who'd convinced him to live inside this dusty wasteland. And how utterly amazing was she in the sack? And did she have a sister?

– I'm afraid I'm single, Kane would be forced to tell them.

– Jesus man, they'd say. You mean to say she brought you here to live with her and now she's left you?

– Not exactly, Kane would say. Are you speaking about my mother?

– Your mother, they'd say. We're talking about your Goddamn wife, buddy! Now you're sticking around here just trying to win her back? Well I feel for you, but Jesus man, get a train back to California. There's plenty other fish in the sea. Who knows how long we're keeping these Japs in the desert. It's no way for a man like you to live.

– I don't think you understand, Kane would tell them. I'm not here in Gila by choice.

– Jesus boy, they'd say. She did a number on you, got you thinking you belong here. She really must be a freaking tiger in the sack!

Though these encounters were to Kane mostly embarrassing or frustrating, he quickly found the confusion surrounding his heritage afforded him one irresistible luxury. He could leave camp whenever he pleased and buy whiskey and cigarettes in the neighboring Arizona towns. Drugstores in Casa Grande made the most sense, as vegetable trucks regularly moved Casa Grande radishes, potatoes, heads of cabbage through the barbed wire.

Though Kane preferred to drink and smoke alone, it was because of him that parties began to emerge in Gila River. Kane became known as the resident hakujin who could get you booze. He would write down the orders of a few young women and men, hop into the cab of an outgoing loading truck, buy a crate of whiskey in Casa Grande and be back to distribute the bottles in a matter of hours. His only conflicts arose when fellow internees became suspicious of him. At what sort of markup was he procuring these goods? Why would he risk his neck for a neighborhood party he wasn't even attending? And just what was this white man doing in camp without a Japanese wife?

– I'm not white, Kane would have to tell them. My parents are Youko and Yoshi Araki. My brothers are Dennis and Shimmy. My sisters are Ruthie and Z. We all live together in the southeast barracks.

– I know, they would say. But where were you born?

– I was born in Santa Maria, California, Kane would tell them.

– Well that doesn't sound like Japan to me, they'd say.

– There aren't more than a few hundred people here ever seen Japan in the flesh. Goddammit your whole family is from Los Angeles!

– I know but my ancestors were from Kumamoto.

– Precisely. So were my grandparents. They probably knew each other.

– Alright so maybe that landed you here. But tell us, just where and when did you get adopted?

The most traumatic incident for Kane occurred on an afternoon when Youko Araki mistook her son for a white military officer that'd broken into their family's barrack. A ritual preparation for Kane's whiskey run was for him to starch and dress in his only suit and tie, and to slick his hair back with Wildroot Cream Oil. A measure that people told him enhanced the disguise of his whiteness.

"Rape!" Youko cried out upon seeing him. "There's a hakujin in here trying to rape me!"

The incident drew the attention of all the Araki neighbors, many of whom felt it necessary to beat Kane with sticks and wrestle him to the ground. It took nearly an hour of explaining before interveners felt convinced, first that Kane was not there to rape his own mother, and second, that he was not in fact a white man.

– I'm not a rapist, Kane had to cry out. Mom, it's me!

– Kane, is that you? Jesus, what are you doing disguised like that? You must be trying to give me a Goddamn heart attack.

Kane Araki lived and worked, more or less as a bootlegger, in Gila River until 1945 when most of its occupants had left for cities like Seattle, Chicago and Detroit. It would be several decades before he ever discussed his experiences living as a suspect hakujin in camp. It was in the late-eighties, back in California, Kane found himself talking to his neighbors about what he, his wife and his parents were planning to spend their reparations on. Perhaps on flights to Japan, as none of them had ever been, had never paid their respects to their ancestors' burial sites.

– Jesus, his neighbors shook their heads in disbelief. So the President even plans to pay reparations to the white people who lived in internment camps voluntarily? Kane, it sounds like you came up with a pretty slick deal on that one.

## **yellow creosote blossoms, piss-stained gaillardia**

Of the fourteen thousand internees at the Gila River Relocation Center only one was briefly given the privilege of a private outhouse. Her name was Ruthie Araki, and although every garment, every curve and gesture gave an impression of womanhood, she had been born Yoshikane Araki, son to Yoshi and Kashi Araki, and into her adulthood accursed with twin, hair-covered nuts and an eight-inch cock.

It was commonly agreed that camp latrines were the most degrading aspect of the years in Gila River. Men and women defecated through wooden planks, the planks punched down the line with anywhere from six to a dozen ass-sized ovals. The planks balanced over trenches cut three to five feet deep and reinforced from cave-ins by concrete. The trenches were cut at a slant so it would take very little water to evacuate feces and urine from the peak of any trench out toward the septic tank. Only the person that sat at the highest point of the trench had the benefit of flushing their waste when finished. It was a greatly vied-for seat as when water did rush down, inhabitants down the row were regaled with raucous wastewater spitting up at their asses. If you were unlucky enough to be the last on the plank during a flush, it was typical for you to feel the cold thud of a foreign, bobbing turd.

Though some of the women's latrines were outfitted with partitions, the men pissed and shat shoulder-to-shoulder. While unpleasant for all, for Ruthie it was the most abject, degrading set of circumstances she'd ever been forced to endure. Her friends assumed it was thrilling for Ruthie to watch the young men strip down to their wiry curtains of pubic hair, their long, crinkled penises. But the truth was most of the naked men she saw, especially those her age, frightened or disgusted her. Ruthie wanted love far more than she wanted sex. And even when she did feel horny, it became impossible to prefigure a lover once she'd sat nearby while he fidgeted and grunted and farted.

Ruthie attempted to save any unpleasant bodily functions until the dead of night when the latrines would likely be empty. But at that hour scorpions were difficult to avoid, and she quickly became the most frequent visitor of her grid's infirmary. Some evenings Ruthie ventured over to the women's latrine, but because of her unpleasantly large cock, women of the older generation objected to her company. Following several confrontations involving Ruthie's attempt to enter the women's side of the compound, her block's community decided a private pit toilet might be the best solution.

As the military police would not recognize Ruthie's dilemma, the pooling of materials, the building and the maintenance of her toilet fell upon the internees of her surrounding barracks. Supplies were credited and shipped in by friends and relatives on the outside. The construction passed quickly as there were a number of local experts in architecture, engineering and waste management. Ruthie's beauty had always made her something of a celebrity and it was relatively easy to assemble volunteers who dug the six-foot catch and poured the concrete. In a week the ventilation pipes were raised, the fly screens bolted. The walls were nailed together, painted. An anonymous admirer even placed a bouquet of desert wildflowers at its entrance, yellow creosote blossoms, the wine-colored spurs of snapdragons.

The problems began just weeks after the pit toilet's christening. Ruthie relished the privacy it afforded, but admitted it was unfair that she solely be given rights to a structure that so many had come together to make. And so she declared the pit toilet public for anyone that wanted an opportunity to relieve themselves in solitude. Though she did ask that all inhabitants help her by contributing sawdust, ash or lime to keep the room fresh and sanitary. Before long, lines of neighbors formed to use Ruthie's outhouse. And soon after the lines swelled with internees coming from all corners of camp. Some walked from camp blocks a mile away for the chance to void with calm and dignity. Designs were exchanged. Modifications

discussed. And plans were drawn up for more pit toilets to be reproduced all over camp.

It was after a scuffle broke out that the military police were alerted to this private-toilet situation. The scuffle was of no concern. Just an older man struck down and kicked once or twice in the neck for cutting the line. An arrest was promised but hardly necessitated an official report. Still the MPs did not like the idea of additional structures being erected by these internees. It was troubling enough that some families had been given their own private barracks where collusion was likelihood. But it would be nothing for one of these outhouse chambers to contain a secret installation for radio broadcast. Then all manner of fucked-up scenarios became feasible. The Japs could be flying overhead the way of Pearl Harbor, gunning guards down, leaving the watchtowers in a wake of fire. And who could imagine what might be staged in the desert? Once the American Japs considered themselves obligated to these foreign Japs, post-rescue. Who knew what brothers of a common grudge might wage against a nearby city?

After just months following its inception, the camp MPs ordered Ruthie's outhouse be burned down. Ruthie filed a complaint that was more or less only ever read by Ruthie. The fire happened on a cloudy morning, when a miraculous desert rain almost saved the structure from igniting. But MPs arrived to splash the walls with gasoline. Gasoline down the throat of the toilet and into the ventilation pipes. And then an inferno. Combined with the methane that'd stored underground, Ruthie's pit toilet blistered and hacked rank smoke into the night. The stench of smoldering shit lasted for weeks. And Ruthie's block became infested with vultures, attracted by what they assumed was the smell of corpses.

## **a steady diet**

Kane Araki's insomnia was once so severe he did not sleep for nine days, and it happened that on the sixth day his dead grandfather, Yoshimi Araki, a consistent inhabitant of Kane's childhood dreams, pushed through the doors of the mess hall, in the flesh, sat down, and asked for a bowl of soup, pickled turnips and rice, and before the bedlam of Yoshimi's ghost dissipated, the seventh day of Kane's insomnia ushered in low-lying stratus clouds, icy precipitation, and then the battalion of elephant seals, a thousand strong, surging through camp, those monstrous sea gods that'd for years been an obsession of Kane's, the hulking bulls thundering into one another, sea flesh rippling like electric current, barking through their probosces, the females blasting through mud, turning the swamped baseball diamond into nursing wallows for their pups, and before a single seal turd had been dealt with, on the eighth day the architecture of Santa Maria began its emergence, the transplanted landscape of Kane's dreams, pharmacies, schools, mortuaries, feed stores, theaters, apartment complexes, butcher shops, department stores, bars, diners ruptured from the desert, claiming their positions between barracks, behind the canteen, rising up beside the patrol towers, so that on the ninth morning the decision was made for military police to investigate, intervene, six men raiding the Araki barrack, knocking past his family members, subduing Kane, feeding a rubber hose past his throat, funneling into him a milkthick sedation.

It was during Kane's dreamless sleep that Yoshimi vanished, the parade of elephant seals puckered and dissolved, and the ghost edifice of Santa Maria crumbled and fell back into the Arizona dust. From that day forward, Kane was administered a steady diet of barbiturates, and within just a few months of his tenth birthday, was showing severe signs of retrograde amnesia, so that the day his mother held his train ticket to leave Gila River he no longer recalled Yoshimi Araki, his obsessive fascination of Californian elephant seals, or any particular storefront of the city he'd left three years previous.



## **a wig**

Margaret Morri lay in a quickly darkening field of silverleaf tomato weed and Arizona creosote poppies. She had plucked one of the hard, yellow Nightshade tomatoes and was pressing it like an unfurled rosebud to the end of her nose. Beside her Kenji Hirayama lay, half-asleep, half-expired cigarette riding his bottom lip, vaguely attempting to adjust his cheap, shag wig. With the exception of the wig, Ken was naked, though the low-hanging smoke seemed fitted to his body as though a white tuxedo. Margaret brushed at her arms, calves, dust that'd caked along with her sweat, reached across Ken's body, picked her blouse up from off the sand, and began buttoning it.

– Tonight I'm going over the southern wires, Margaret, Ken said. I'm going over the southern wires and into Casa Grande.

– There are four guards securing the southern wires, Margaret said. Four guards, four rifles. You're asking to get yourself shot.

– Tonight there will be only two guards posted, Ken said. Two guards and I'm friendly with them both. There's Dale Ridge, and there's George something. Or maybe it's Harry. Dale and Harry. Anyhow they're both alright.

– Alright meaning they speak to you from the other side of the wires. They smoke your cigarettes and tell you which of us they'd like to screw. Tell you how when they're in their towers they can look down their rifles and into our rooms while we're changing into nightgowns.

– I mean it that they hate their jobs and hate Gila River the same as us. And they understand they're part of a problem, but don't have any power to change it. From the petal of a nearby creosote blossom, a tick the width of a fingernail tumbled belly-up onto Margaret's beach towel. She held it down using the last of her burning cigarette.

– Then letting you cross at the southern wires when they can be reported is unlikely, Margaret said. If they say they're men without power, that's saying they're a link in the power of another man who doesn't believe in being lenient with Japs.

– I'm going over those wires Margaret, Ken said. There's a diner in Casa Grande. It has a counter that sells cigarettes and whiskey. I'm going to bring it all back and sell it. People want to have parties again. People want to listen to music and dance and get tanked. I can help them do that, and I can make money.

– What good is your money, Margaret asked. If we never make it out of Gila River, there's nothing to own. You want to buy your barrack from them?

– We aren't going to die in Gila River, Ken said. The war will end. We'll go home together. We'll need money to start again. The right way.

– Stay here tonight, Margaret said. Be with me. Go to Casa Grande next month.

– No, Ken said. It's tonight. I'm going tonight. And if I come back, if I can make us a lot of money this way, I want you to consider having a baby with me. It's been a year. We don't have to wait until we're back in California to start a family. There are good doctors and a decent hospital here.

Margaret stared hard into Ken. She was dressed now, an unlit cigarette bucked upon her lips. She struck a match and drew it to her face. The tobacco crawled in the fire. A white moth of smoke climbed into the air.

– Stay here tonight, she said. I want you to be with me. Go to Casa Grande next month.

– I'm not staying, Ken said.

– You don't remember, she said. You don't remember what to say next.

– I remember, Ken said. He ground his cigarette into the hot sand and struck up another.

– You remember, she said. Only you won't say.

– That's right, he said.

– What you say, Margaret began, what your line is, is Margaret, I'll stay if once we leave Gila, you have three daughters. Three daughters just like you.

– It isn't right to say that Margaret, Ken said. I'm writing my own lines now.

– You aren't allowed to write your own lines. I've explained this to you before. You say what I've given you, or you have to go. That's all there is.

– I know that isn't true, Ken said. It's been nearly a year. I know you can get past this. I know there's a way for you to start again.

– I'll stay with you Margaret, she said. I'll stay if you promise you'll have my daughters. Three daughters like you.

– That isn't what happened, Ken said. I'm sorry, but your husband didn't stay. He never promised you he would. He left over the southern wires. He didn't come back to camp alive.

– Not in this version, Margaret said. In this version, he stays. And I promise to give him three daughters.

– There aren't any Goddamn daughters! You aren't a mother yet, Margaret. Don't act like this!

Ken removed his wig and threw it into the dirt. Beneath the wig, Ken was nearly bald. What hair remained looked green and dismal in the remaining light. He wiped the sweat from his scalp and flicked it. The nearby rocks darkened with his sweat.

– If I wasn't clear with you, then I apologize, Margaret said. What all this is about, we aren't ever going to be together. You play a role. If you don't play it, it has to stop.

– I know this isn't the first time you've done this, Ken said. You think it's a secret what you do? I've heard this before from Jack Shinoda. He told me there were others before him. Men you made wear this wig and Kane's old clothes. And made them say the same Goddamn crazy things.

– You're right about everything, Ken, she said. It's just the role that's irreplaceable, not the actor.

Margaret picked the wig from off the ground and shook the hot, golden debris from it. She held it out to Ken.

– You’re good at playing Kane, she said. You don’t look like him. You’re a little small. And you have a sad face. But you’re kind like him. You can go on if you like.

– No Margaret, he said. You know Kane is gone. Ken reached out for his clothes and began to dress.

– I’m going over the wires tonight, he said.

Margaret wasn’t looking at him anymore. She was combing her fingers through the wig as though in search of something.

– Why would you do that? she asked.

– Because Kane was right. There’s good money in it if I come back. People are desperate to feel different. They’re drinking wine made from sugar water and raisins. They’re drinking vanilla extract. They’ll pay three or four times what a bottle of whiskey is worth.

– And what’ll you spend your money on? Is it money for chewing gum in the canteen? Money to rot like leaves beneath your mattress? It’s as valueless today as it was two years ago.

– More people are leaving Gila, he said. I have family in Detroit. I’m going there in a month, and I’m staying until they open the coast to us again. You can come with me.

– That won’t ever happen, Ken, Margaret said.

Ken was dressed now. He was back in his own clothes. Kane’s clothes lay in a pile beside the wig.

– The same tower guard patrols the south, Margaret said. He carries the same rifle.

– I’ve talked to him about it, Ken said. He’s taken some money as a security. He understands I’m going and coming back.

– You can’t count on him for anything.

– I'm not afraid.

– How do you plan to find your way in the desert?

– I have a light. I'll follow the road.

– You should let him keep your money, Margaret said. And you should go to Detroit next month.

The sun had fallen and steeped the sky in red. A scorpion shuffled out from a tent of bark and slipped into the crown of Kane's wig.

– This is your chance, he said.

– If you keep doing this to yourself, he said, I'm afraid of what will happen to you.

– You don't understand what you're talking about, Margaret said. When you've been loved by someone who dies, you already live between this place and the world over. That's who the ghost is. It's the one who can't leave.

Margaret folded Kane's clothes and tucked them beneath her arm. Then she walked out of the silverleaf tomato weed, the Arizona creosote poppies, and back toward the southern barracks.

## **a suitcase**

When it came for Kane Araki to pack his suitcase for Gila River, he knew he could not survive the desert without his eight pairs of cowboy boots. To get them to fit, he crammed one boot into another, then those boots he packed into another like Russian nesting dolls. Finally he was left with a single, densely-packed shaft of cowhide and lizard skin he wedged into a crook of the base of his case.

Kane also felt his mother would be lost without her shell walkway. Three years prior, embers from a brushfire had floated up and purchased most of Youko Araki's vision. In response, Kane walked into the ocean, took a mighty breath, and dove through a thicket of kelp toward the deepwater crevices. When he emerged he hauled with him thirty massive red abalone. On Youko's porch he shattered the shells and laid down an iridescent walkway for her to follow. Before leaving for Gila River, Kane pried every shell fragment from the ground, stacked them like dinnerware, folded them into a sheet, and lodged them in his suitcase

Kane owned seventeen birds and a horse. For his birds he lined a picnic basket with a tablecloth and placed them in it, side by side. He gave them a tin of water and a tin of strawberry jam. Then he anchored the basket into the center of his toiletries, his hairbrush, bottled aftershave, toothpaste squeezing the basket at every side so it could not move during travel. Finally his horse he made step down into his suitcase where he'd made a bed of his shirts and long underwear. He combed away the mosquitoes from her back and hips, and held a punchbowl of ice water before her to drink, then fastened her halter to a wood crate of contraband whiskey.

Behind the Araki took shed, a miraculous patch of wild strawberries burst through the soil every year. Their arrival became a minor celebration with the Arakis, who chopped the berries at an outdoor table and tossed them with bowls of milk and brown sugar. And though the Arakis could never help but ravage the plants, though they never saved seed or runners, the massive berries managed to

reappear. Kane was cautious not to damage the root structures of the plants as he dug them from the ground and placed them in paper sacks, anchoring them with aerated soil and loose gravel. He understood the plants could only survive under the cool Pacific fog. With a funnel he sucked lungfuls of mist at the edge of Guadalupe Beach, then he exhaled them into the paper sacks before winding down the tops of them. That plot of fifty or sixty plants was the last possession he folded into his suitcase.

Kane wound his belt around one end of his suitcase and several feet of rope at the other, so that with a sudden bump, it could not spring open and release his birds into the train cabin.

## a lesson

Yoshikane Araki and Margaret Morri once complained they lived in a barrack possessing the thinnest partitions in all of the Gila River Relocation. Though they had not performed a legitimate study of this, they were absolutely correct in their assumption. Extreme shifts in weather, cheap building materials, and the nesting of desert insects assured the Araki-Morri dividing wall was Gila's record-holding most slender wafer of wood paneling indeed by a margin of six and a quarter millimeters. Furthermore, Kane and Margaret's quarters were lodged in the noisiest, most overcrowded block at the southernmost, easternmost corner of all the Gila River neighborhoods. It was also the youngest, hippest neighborhood, host to dozens of interned artists, though this came as little comfort. If a military board had bothered to perform a census, had taken down the combined ages of every married couple in the southeast block, they would've discovered Kane and Margaret, at their respective ages of eighty-two and eighty-five, were the oldest pair by more than a century above the mean.

Although this statistic could never be discussed outright, those who observed Kane and Margaret couldn't help but speculate how itchy the age disparity made them on a daily basis. Did being around such young couples fill them with nostalgia? Regret? Longing? Despair? Did it make them feel wise and superior? What did human senility actually feel like anatomically? Could they feel it against their bodies, rubbing them along with the day's grime? Did they smell it on mornings they squeezed and lathered their dirty laundry? Did they hear it clinking around in their language when they exchanged greetings with the neighbors?

At the Methodist church Kane and Margaret were the only couple who dared claim a front pew, an arrangement made more noticeable when they inevitably dozed during the sermon. In the showers, Margaret couldn't help compare the relaxed, discolored properties of her own skin to the seamless, almost pubescent bodies of the other women. And then there was the barber who slapped



Kane upon the shoulder and announced enthusiastically that Jiichan Araki was his favorite patron, since he regularly asked for his nostril hairs to be pruned back. But the only aspect of the southeast block egregious enough to turn Kane and Margaret into sour, old goat curmudgeons occurred between the hours of 11pm and 2am every night, when the two were awoken by the distinct noises of newly married couples fiercely, hysterically fucking each other.

Kane and Margaret's barrack was divided into sleeping quarters for three couples. Their dividing wall was shared with Joy and Shimmy Nakamura, who had been touring folk singers and peach and almond farmers from Stockton. And on the opposite side of the Nakamuras lived Randy and Mina Ota of Turlock, an aeronautics engineer and a painter. The Ota couple were the worst offenders, as they'd met and married in camp, and made love with the doom and desperation of two people who imagined their bodies would dissolve if and when they slept. And this desperation was always punctuated by Randy's orgasmic squeals and his frantic, uncontrollable sobs.

– Why would a man feel the need to cry during sex, Margaret asked Kane. Is he not getting it exactly the way he wants?

– Maybe he cries because sex is so beautiful at their age, Kane said. And he can't take it how very much complete he feels. As he's down there sticking her with it.

– Of course there's that, Margaret said. Though it doesn't entirely sound beautiful and transcendent. It sounds as if he's starving to death and can't undo a lid from a jar.

– Anyhow, it isn't our business, Kane said. I shouldn't have joked. We need to try and ignore it.

– I could understand if there was something painful about it, Margaret said. If he had a medical condition. If his little weenie fell off at the exact moment he finished. And he had to sew it back between his legs by candlelight. Then all this sobbing would make plenty of sense.

– You would like that to be the reason, wouldn't you, Kane said. I can hear the excitement in your voice. You wish you were a doctor of that condition.

– Mina should be the one crying, Margaret said. She doesn't sound as if she's enjoying herself.

– How would you know that, Kane asked. We hardly know what they might be like.

– Listen to Joy when she and Shimmy are going at it, Margaret said. That is the pitch of a lady who is enjoying herself.

– I've heard of some men who cry after, Kane said. I've heard there are women who cry too.

– Who have you heard that from, Margaret asked. About the crying after. Who does an old man like you talk to about those things?

– Oh, I don't know, Kane said. You want me to give you a name? The name of a specific person who told me that?

– We're too old to keep secrets from each other, Margaret said.

– Aiko, Kane said. Well, she used to cry occasionally. Afterward.

– Your wife, Margaret said. Jesus. Yuck.

– You wanted to know, Kane said. It didn't happen all the time.

– Christ, your wife though. I wish you hadn't told me that. Now I'm imagining it.

– She's been dead over forty years, Kane said. I didn't think it'd mean anything to you.

– Why did she cry though, Margaret asked. I mean, didn't you ever ask her why she did it?

– There are moments you aren't supposed to ask questions, Kane said.

– But, you never took it personally, Margaret asked.

– No, she told me not to. She told me it was just the way she was.

– I thought you said you never discussed it.

– We never did any more than that. It makes people uncomfortable to talk about it. I don't ask you why you cry when you get tanked.

– You don't ask me, Margaret said. But I can tell you precisely. When I drink I can't help but remember all the things I wanted to write and paint and all the places I wanted to travel in my life. And I realize I'm only a drunk, ugly old woman who is trapped in this life and can't go anywhere.

– You aren't so very ugly, Kane said. You're actually very pretty for a woman of your age.

– Jesus, they're at it again, Margaret said. Listen to them.

Kane and Margaret listened to Ronnie snorting. They could feel the Ota bed frame vibrating against the planks of the floor.

– I feel sorry for the Nakamuras, Kane said. They must get it even louder than us.

– Those two pigs are always at it as well, Margaret said. We should teach them all a lesson.

– What sort of lesson would we teach them, Kane asked.

– I'm not sure, Margaret said. Maybe I'll light this whole barrack on fire. They'll be so distracted they won't even notice.

– This is how it should be when a couple is young, Kane said. Like rabbits. Even a priest would agree.

– To hell with a priest then, Margaret said. He doesn't have to share a room at night with them when they're in heat.

Other nights, the sounds of the Nakamuras making love were slow and mournful, and Kane and Margaret were roused from their dreams gradually, painfully, as though being reeled back from the world over by tethers fixed about their ankles.

– I had the dream again, Margaret said. I had the dream I was walking along Venice beach, and I came upon an enormous whale dying gruesomely on the sand. It was crying through a massive, dripping eye like a black melon. And when the

whale opened its mouth to speak to me, the disgusting sex groans of Joy Nakamura came out.

Kane pretended not to hear her and rolled onto his side. Margaret threw the covers back, crept toward the dividing wall and pressed the side of her face to it.

– Margaret, get away from there, he said. It isn't right to spy on them.

– I'll listen to what I want, Margaret said, waving Kane away. They aren't hiding it from anyone.

As the Nakamura's moans seemed to grow more critical, Kane rose from bed and stood with his good ear near the partition.

– Oh boy, Margaret said. How long are his strokes? I just don't understand it.

– Maybe he isn't inside her, Kane said. Maybe he's using his mouth. They say he's a master harmonicist.

Margaret had to cover her mouth with both hands to smother her laughter.

– Quiet, Kane said. They'll hear you and think we're perverts for listening to them.

Margaret climbed back into bed and pulled the blankets over her face. She continued to cackle. Kane moved beside her, and the groans continued to grow more troubled and insistent. Then abruptly they fell into silence.

– Sounds like he got it done, Kane said. It didn't sound easy.

– I hope he brushes his teeth before he goes back to sleep, Margaret said.

From beyond the dividing wall they heard the wooden chamber of a guitar being knocked around, tuned and then strummed. And then the muffled singing voices of the Nakamuras filled the barrack.

– Oh Jesus and Mary, Margaret said. Now they have to write a Goddamn song about how great it was.

– They have nice voices, Kane said.

– Let them use their voices when the sun is out and so am I.

– What does it matter, Kane said. What urgent business have we got on our morning schedule?

– That isn't the point, Margaret said. Discretion is the point. And yes, by the way, all of us have jobs to go to in the morning. The mess hall doesn't take its own inventory. The Courier isn't going to write your stories for you.

– The mess hall and the Courier will run with or without us. The bread trucks will arrive in the docks. The meat will get rationed. When I kick the bucket they'll find a cheaper reporter to write on the JACL and the WRA and the people who leave the colony.

– It isn't decent, neighborly behavior, Margaret said. I tell you, I'm going to teach them a lesson. The Nakamuras and the Otas and the Goddamn couples we can hear from across the track too.

– A lesson, Kane said. Who do you think you are to teach a grown person their manners?

– We're just going to show them how it feels to have their sleep interrupted, Margaret said. We're going to wait until we hear them snoring. And then we're going to let them hear the sounds of an old couple going at it.

– Don't be crazy. You want everyone in camp talking about us tomorrow?

– Let them talk. We might die here in the southeast block. I haven't got anything at stake.

– We have children and grandchildren in the block over. You don't think they're going to be embarrassed?

– You're telling me you won't do it? Fine. I don't need your help. I'll sit in a chair by their wall and do it myself.

– I didn't say I wouldn't do it, Kane said. I just want to wait a moment and contemplate what you're dragging us into.

– If you're too scared of the consequences, I'll do it myself. I don't need a partner just to make dirty sounds.

– I very much doubt that, Kane said. They'd know in a second it wasn't authentic. All I'm saying is we've got to have a plan. We may even have to write a script.

– A script, hell, Margaret said. This is not an acting class. I know what sounds to make. They've been waking me up every Goddamn night.

– If it doesn't sound convincing, they're going to know we're doing this out of spite, Kane said. And then it won't be a lesson. It'll only mean angry neighbors.

– Fine, Margaret said. We'll have signals. When I point at the ceiling it means to groan louder. When I give you the thumbs-up it means to keep on at what you're doing. And when I slide my finger across my neck it means to gurgle and stop.

– Hold on a second, Kane said. Just hold one second. Now I'm feeling sort of nervous. You're making me nervous.

– What's there to make you nervous, you sissy. I'll do it without you.

– Well go ahead then, Kane said. If you have to do it right this second, go on.

– I will, Margaret said. She rose from bed and took a seat beside the dividing wall. The picking of the Nakamuras' guitar had broken off into the couple's harmonious snores. After a few moments Margaret got back into bed.

– Goddamn you, she said. You've gotten me feeling nervous now. I had the momentum a second ago and now I've lost it.

– It isn't going to be easy to be loud on purpose, Kane said. I think the easiest thing, for this first time, is we should do it for real.

– For real he says, Margaret said. She drew the covers to her chin and moved closer to Kane. Do you even remember how? I wouldn't want you to injure yourself.

– I think I remember how to fake the part of a loving husband, he said.

– Good for you then, Margaret said. I also remember how to lie still and feign interest. Thank you for asking.

The two began taking off their clothes from under the covers. Their undergarments slipped from the sides of the bed.

– Kane kissed the side of Margaret’s face and said, clear aside the cobwebs then.

Margaret felt momentarily shocked. It had been years since his lips had touched her body.

– Jesus, Margaret said. Fine. We’ll go through with it this way, this time, if you like. But I just want you to know the sounds I make aren’t for you. They’re out of hate for the Goddamn neighbors.

It was in this way that Kane Araki and Margaret Morri enjoyed a brief rejuvenation of their relationship, from the Fall of 1943 until January of 1945. For several years prior to the war, the pair hadn’t made any efforts to be intimate. If you’d found one of them in a candid mood, they would’ve admitted they hadn’t seen much of each other during the last decade of their marriage. Kane had spent most of his mornings away from home, fishing along the pier for jack perch and drinking beer. And Margaret had spent most of her evenings by the radio, mending clothes or pickling vegetables and drinking sherry. It wasn’t until they’d moved to the southeast block that the two began taking their meals and going to bed together.

Kane and Margaret put out their lights at 6pm. Then at 10pm they revived to fuck each other with as they recalled was all the power and frenzy of a newly-married couple. Some nights Kane wrote a script. Margaret insisted the Nakamuras and Otas hear them call out disturbing things to each other. The way she said it, she was out to spoil their libidos.

– You feel so tight, Kane said. God, a woman of your age. Still tight as a baby kitten.

– Not so deep, Margaret said. I’m getting raw. I’m raw as an open wound.

– What is that smell, Kane asked. Something in here smells like oil and bleach. On nights Kane and Margaret felt too tired to make love, they lay beside

each other and groaned loudly until they fell back asleep. Over time, as it felt insincere to groan without touching, they held hands until their groans reverted back to snores. Shortly after the start of their routine, the two slept soundly enough so another couple never reawakened them.

Their children called their behavior shameful and in private asked them to stop. It'd taken their children months, building the courage to broach the subject, but people were starting to talk openly about the elderly couple in the southeast block who woke others with the racket of their lovemaking. Their grandchildren cheered them forward.

– Don't listen to the disgusting things others say about you, their grandchildren said to them. We're proud to have grandparents who still love each other after seventy years.

– I wasn't married when I was twelve, Kane said. How old do you think I am?

It was six months after the start of Kane and Margaret's endeavor that an announcement was made of Randy and Mina Ota's divorce. It was all a terrible scandal, and occasionally the Araki name was slipped into conversation with the Otas' trouble. Randy lived by himself in the last segment of the barrack, and Mina went to live with her family in the northwest block of camp.

– Do you think we had something to do with it, Kane asked Margaret.

– Jesus, I hope so, Margaret said.

– I'm being serious, Kane said. Should we stop?

– God no, Margaret said. You actually think we did that? Gladly I'd trade the marriages of the Otas' and the Nakamuras' to know our sex life has that power.

It was another sixth months before the sting of the Otas' divorce had faded from camp, and the topic of Kane and Margaret's love life could be publicly addressed. Newly-married couples began making visits to Kane and Margaret for their advice on healthy relationships. What were their secrets to resolving arguments? How soon after a fight was it appropriate to become physical again? How had they maintained their affection and vigor into their old age? What



aphrodisiacs did they consume and what supply did they have stashed away in the Gila desert?

– As the barber tiled Kane’s head to prune his nose hairs he asked him, Jiichan, what is the secret to your long and healthy marriage?

– Kane found himself imitating a voice for what he imagined a wise man would sound like. You must strive to understand each other completely without asking anything directly. You must make note of all the things she wants, that you do not want to give her. And then you must make it your great passion in life to give her those things.

– Right Jiichan, passion, the barber said. But what about your positions? Do you drink snake wine? Do you eat cactus pears? Honeycomb?

On the January evening Kane died, he huddled beside Margaret and made the low moan of a man in pleasure. It wasn’t until morning she realized he’d passed. Margaret Morri continued to live in their barrack by herself until she too passed, just weeks before the end of the war. During those last days, her neighbors bought treats for her from the canteen and made visits to ask her for her secrets about her long, happy life.

– Being around so many young people made us feel we were young again, she told them.

During her last nights she often woke and turned to rouse Kane so she could make love to him. Her eyes closed, her hands traced along the side of the cold mattress until she fell back to sleep. Other nights she dreamed of the tremendous whale on the beach. The black eye wept, but the sounds that came from the whale’s mouth weren’t Joy Nakamura, but from the ghost of her husband.

Kane Araki and Margaret Morri were the only two people not to make it back from the southeast block alive. As per their instructions, their ashes were transported back to California, to a shared plot in the local cemetery, just blocks from their property.

## **over the fence and into the desert**

Kane Araki had saved few pictures of himself from his years in camp. But he had been the subject of a portrait by the Hawaiian-Okinawan painter Eve Shimabukuro. It came as no surprise an artist of her proficiency would've wanted to immortalize Kane in top form. He had been a bodybuilding champion two years prior as part of a community-building event at Tulare's assembly center.

Eve's paintings developed over a series of months where the color of Kane's swim trunks dwindled from robust green to a shucked, moth-eaten yellow. And the muscles in his upper body grew massive and terrifying. Eve asked him to stop the incessant lifting for a few weeks. She likened him to a child who outgrew his form before it could be immaculately rendered. He was ruining the integrity of her portraits, she said. A dozen times she claimed the canvas upon which she'd been working was outmoded and needed to be made anew. She also did not like it when people dropped in to see her work and commented she must be exaggerating – perversely – the size of Kaneshiro's desert-burnished pectorals. Likely, they said, because the two were sweet on each other.

When Kane heard this last part he found himself appalled. He'd engaged in their collaboration as he'd thought any romance between them would be seen as impossible. Eve was an emerging spinster. Eve was squat, rotund. Eve was not pretty and did not wear makeup. She never even attempted to conceal the effects of a grisly oven accident she'd had as a child. A leash of bark-colored scars ran alongside her bare arms and thighs. He'd thought all this would be an opportunity to make him appear as tolerant and sensitive, since he'd once been told that girls became more attracted to men that showed affection to beastly women. Now he found he was being insulted behind his back.

Kane immediately took up with a pretty girl called Margaret and stopped spending so much time posing shirtless beside barbed wire. He took to openly mocking Eve among his friends and family. He did not abide by proper etiquette

when greeting members of Eve's family. And his mornings and evenings retreated into a furious exercise regimen so that every vein gripping his chest became frantic and swollen. He also began denouncing her war art as pointless since the people of his generation would never want to be reminded of it.

Still Kane was convinced he deserved to see a finished portrait. He had wasted so much time with Eve's nonsense already it only made sense to see it through to completion. And so he continued occasionally to succumb to Eve's requests. Making the slow, stifling trek past the mess hall, the chapel, the tracts of scorpion-infested barracks. Carrying her stool and easel for her toward the watchtower. Then stripping down to nothing more than sandals and his dust-colored shorts.

On their last afternoon together, Kane asked if Eve had never thought about finding a husband. She was too old to produce her own children, of course. But Eve's younger sister had two sons. She could help raise them or adopt one or two of her own. He commented Eve might look more approachable if she started wearing a tiny bit of makeup. He went so far as to suggest his own girlfriend might provide her cosmetic supplies and instruction.

– But I have a husband, she told him. And a stepson.

Kane was astonished he'd never heard this before. Where was her husband? Her son? Why had he never seen or heard of them?

– They're living outside camp, she said. Still in Los Angeles. Venice.

When they finished painting that afternoon Eve told him his company was no longer required for her to finish the piece. That she would let him know when it was finished and he could stop by her family's barrack and have a look.

When he asked if he could see what she had presently she hesitated. Then she shrugged, rotating the canvas in her hands for him to see. To Kane's horror he saw the subject in her painting was headless. The neck terminating into brown gnarls like an upended tree. What could this mean? Was she mocking him? Resentment shot through him as though a chill. He began shaking, sputtering. He raised her

easel and cast it over the fence and into the desert. Then he stomped away hurt and confused.

It was not until he was in his nineties that Kane saw Eve's painting again. By then her project had expanded to over a thousand iterations. A thousand hulking Kaneshiro Arakis testing the resolve of the barbed wire or climbing the rotted planks of a watchtower. Kaneshiro lying upon a deposit of scalding rocks. Kaneshiro pricking himself, his blood merging into the syrup of a desert pear. Eighty Evelyn Shimabukuro pieces inhabited the walls of the Japanese-American museum where Kane padded through on his walker, unable to recognize his prior face or body. Nor would he acknowledge the resemblances between the artist's photograph and his own wife.

– She looks just like her, Corinne Araki said, touching the plaque that held Evelyn's wide, impassive face. They're the exact same build even. I don't understand why you don't see it.

– How do you know my wife, Kane asked. She's been gone a long time. Were you one of her students?

– Well I was only her daughter, Corinne said.

– Oh, Kane said. I thought you were the curator.

Sweetly he took her hand and apologized for not recognizing her.

– I suppose all that happens a lot these days, he said.

## **a marriage**

Kaneshiro Araki was the tiniest man Margaret Morri had ever seen, at just under eight inches tall, weighing in at two pounds, six ounces fully clothed, and she loved him passionately, devotedly, from the moment he first parted hair from her face and kissed her, until their final kiss thirty-eight years later, Kane's tears and saliva amounting to a mask of glistening snail venom upon her cheek, Margaret asleep, dreaming of Kane's parted lips, then drifting away from the body collapsed under uterine cancer, slipping from Kane's small, strong fingers, his retreating cheekbones, his flat Greek nose, his blue-black beard.

Margaret's mother Naoko had always been a harsh critic of the union. The evening Margaret and Kane were married at the Gila River camp chapel, Naoko stood in the doorway of the Morri family barrack for six straight hours, staring in its direction, arms folded, brow puckered. Naoko said she'd met plenty of men like Kane before.

– Of course these eight or nine inch men are beautiful, she told her daughter. But their hearts are restless. Mercurial. You will never find a way to hold him true to you.

This more or less had been the content of every conversation Margaret had entertained with her mother for thirty years.

Following Margaret's death, Kane attended to Naoko until her death, eighteen years later. He cooked her meals, washed her laundry, drove her to medical appointments, and accompanied her to the funerals of family acquaintances. In those eighteen years, Naoko never found a way to verbalize an apology to Kane. Though she dreamed of her apology sometimes, how the words would lather in her mouth, Kane standing in the palm of her hand, her eyes crowded with tears, her coarse, white hair falling at his feet.

## **an egg**

Yoshi K. Araki had only one great love during his lifetime. Her name was Margie Morri, and though she was one of the most beautiful creatures in Gila River, it was her eating rituals he fell in love with and memorized fluently as the Scout Promise.

For breakfast she prepared a slice of hot white toast, a wisp of melting butter, and two large spoonfuls of Arizona desert honey. The crusts were trimmed into four tan stripes, lowered into the butter and honey and gobbled up. The remaining square she folded in half and tilted into her open mouth, never letting a bead of honey escape.

At lunch she ordered a hamburger bun with sesame seeds, and on it she assembled fried cuts of bacon, ice-cold slices of tomato, pickles, chopped cabbage, thin rings of raw zucchini or yellow squash, and Italian salad dressing. The sandwich was cleaved down the center and eaten from corner to corner in slow, contemplative bites.

At dinner she ordered soup, ladled into a shallow bowl she brought with her, a cup of white rice, and one uncooked egg. The egg was rapped upon the table's ledge, its contents unbuckling onto steaming rice, and whipped into rich froth, coating every grain. Salt and pepper were shaken like a religious rite over the bowl. And then a nest of warm egg and rice was submerged by tiny wooden ladle into the broth of her soup and bathed there before being raised up to her lips.

Until the war, Yoshi K. had lived a life tortured by a relentless appetite. As a child he could eat five or six bowls of rice with dinner. If he came upon a fruit tree or a bed of mussels, he ate until he was sick. He'd once eaten an entire row of early potatoes, perhaps twelve pounds of them, unwashed and flaking wet soil. His parents often had to beat him from the kitchen table to keep him from poisoning himself with too much vinegar, hot mustard, mayonnaise, ground red pepper.

But when Yoshi K. discovered Margie it made him feel oddly satiated. The day he first observed her was the day he stopped hiding bread in his jacket pockets. He quit slinging rocks at the desert wrens and skewering them over hot coals. And though they never spoke a sentence to each other, Yoshi K. watched nearly every bite that'd sustained Margie over their three-year relocation to Gila. He craved the routine of her meals as much as his own. On days he could not watch her, his hunger returned and was so overwhelming he could hardly stand straight.

Yoshi K. and Margie had only one day of communication with each other. This happened the morning after Margie injured her arm from a fall off the Morri family's barrack steps. She arrived at the mess hall later than usual, right arm tucked into a sling, left arm carrying a plate of toast. Because her friends had already eaten and gone, she sat directly across from Yoshi K. She did not know his name at the time, but she recognized him as one of the young men whose pastime it was to lift weights, play ukulele and smoke cigarettes down beside the racetrack. She had wandered by that track often and had fantasized about sending a friend over with an invitation to accompany her on a walk.

Generally Margie would've felt too humiliated being across from a stranger without a way to hide her injury. But the sight of Yoshi K. sitting alone in the near-empty mess hall was somehow exhilarating to her. She was further encouraged when she saw his plate of food was untouched, and he'd have to remain in her company for the duration of his meal.

It was in a hospital bed, on the Central Coast of California, decades later, where Margie would admit to her children and grandchildren that her most enduring memory was the morning Yoshi K. cut the crusts from her toast for her. It happened without a word passing between them. There was something oddly rehearsed about it all. It was as though the two had eaten together the evening previous, and she'd instructed him in the manner she wanted him to eat in tandem. At the moment she attempted to manipulate her knife with her non-dominant hand, Yoshi K. instinctively took the knife from her and cut the crusts from her toast

into four stripes. When she'd finished eating them, he folded her toast in half and carefully placed it into her left hand. When he did, it felt as though she were remembering it, as though he'd placed food into her hand a thousand times before. When she was finished eating, he placed her empty plate atop his own and carried them back toward the kitchen.

At lunch Margie found Yoshi K. again. This time he assembled two sandwiches atop sesame buns. Bacon, pickles, cabbage, raw slices of yellow crookneck squash. On one plate he cut the sandwich down the center and slid it across to her. He stared down at his food while they ate. A strange routine formed between them. She didn't ask any questions, and he didn't provide any answers. She felt like a partner in a long, comfortable marriage that weighed its silences as equal with its conversations. At dinner Yoshi K. was waiting for her. In his hand he was polishing the surface of an uncooked egg with his napkin, ready to be cracked over a bowl of rice, whipped, seasoned, and dipped into a cup of broth.

Margie wouldn't have an opportunity to eat with Yoshi K. again. On the evening of their first meal together, a scorpion crawled into Yoshi K.'s mouth while he slept, and its venom suffocated him. Margie didn't learn his name until after he'd passed, and his obituary appeared in the Gila News-Courier.



## **a tiny murder**

Margaret Morri was working a month for the Gila News-Courier, when she knocked a tower of back editions to the floor, and discovered her own face gaping up at her. In the photo, she was wearing a modest dress and singing Ruth Lowe's "I'll Never Smile Again" as part of the camp's talent show. The caption further revealed the performer's name to be Alice Aoki, eldest daughter of Stan and Michi Aoki, from Mendota, California. Their family was currently relocated to the northernmost block, where families tended to be larger, the barracks older, more prone to the infestations of pests, and the mess halls rationed less meat.

Alice's resemblance was uncanny. Both she and Margaret possessed the highest of foreheads, the most slender jaws, the most prominent limbal rings cordoning their eyes, the loosest, darkest curls settling against their cheekbones. The pattern of Alice's dress was even reminiscent of something Margaret had worn to her first adolescent socials. Margaret couldn't help folding the pages and sliding them into her purse. In the evening she clipped the worn image and taped it into a journal for future inspections.

Over the next days Margaret probed the Courier's office for any information about Alice Aoki. The photographer credited for the shot, Henri Kamitaki, recalled the performance instantly. Alice had arrested the audience with her beauty and uncommonly rich voice. Henry had been so stunned that he'd forgotten to raise his camera to his face. Only later did he realize his fingers had unconsciously snapped and wound a series of photos of Alice while his camera hung over his belly.

– It's why the angle is a little low, he said. It's miraculous the lens stayed in focus.

Kenneth Yano, the reporter that had written up the story, also remembered Alice's beauty and charisma.

– She was the most talented singer that evening by a long shot, Kenneth said. Afterward, he had eaten dinner beside her family and discovered Alice was also

accomplished in Ikebana and as a seamstress.

The more Margaret uncovered of Alice, the more resentment began to swell in the recesses of her lower gut, the pit of her throat, the tension between her hands. Wasn't it only two years before everyone was praising the strength and precision of her own singing voice? When the verve and exquisite fragility of her own flower arrangements were sought after? Wasn't her own physical beauty commended on a weekly if not daily basis?

But perhaps people had been more spare with their admiration lately. And what compliments she received were too chaste and impassive. Mostly it was the dull, monotonous praise of her husband and his family. What garbage that seemed to her, held up beside the legitimacy of Alice's photograph and widespread acclaim.

The arrival of Alice Aoki in Margaret's life provoked the competitiveness she'd been subjected to as a girl. Her older sister Laurie had continually plotted to keep Margaret in her shadow. Out of her youth, Laurie established herself as a dutiful daughter and caretaker. Laurie was responsible. Laurie was a skilled cook. She knew how to pickle vegetables. How to crush and reduce fruit over a low flame for preserves. She regularly prepared the family's meals, since both their parents worked long, hot days in the lettuce fields. Laurie had a natural gift for painting and for watercolors. She was also kind and pretty and drew the attention of boys in her class.

In order to carve out her own personhood, it'd been necessary for Margaret to undercut Laurie at every campaign. As a child, Margaret refused to let Laurie dress her or to comb her hair. Even as they walked together to school, Margaret demanded Laurie keep three paces behind her.

– Paces, she remembered confirming forcefully. Not steps, Laurie. There's a difference.

Margaret suggested that out of respect, Laurie should produce paintings of their parents and family friends. Then, no matter its likeness, she would criticize the result for its unflattering or melancholic portrayal.

– Why would you paint Grandma’s face so gray? Is she smelly? Decomposed? Why do you want our grandma to die? You think she will leave you money? Jewelry? You selfish cow. You could’ve at least painted her a decent bouquet. The flowers she’s holding are wilted.

In later years, Margaret planted the notion in her mother that Laurie should marry as young as possible. Laurie was the sort to settle into a careless, spinster existence with her parents if you allowed her to get too comfortable. If she did not capitalize on her looks, which soon would tarnish, she’d surely forfeit any ability to produce heirs. Just prior to her high school graduation, Laurie was arranged to marry a local farm laborer. Her husband was an older man with hard features. Margaret said he looked the sort to keep Laurie honest and well-fed.

Laurie hadn’t been the only woman Margaret had been forced to outclass. There was also her former friend, Lilly Shimabukuro, that’d once been engaged to Margaret’s husband, Yoshikane Araki. The three of them had been schoolmates and friends for years, when Lilly conspired to steal Yoshi’s affection for herself. Yoshi was both handsome and a local competitor at bodybuilding events. And it was well known that he would never have chosen a girl so plain as Lilly, had Margaret not acted as a catalyst for their friendship. A lazier woman would’ve conceded the fight at Lilly and Yoshi’s engagement. Disowned the pair as ingrates. But Margaret only burrowed further within their union. Planted seeds of anxiety and mistrust until the two lovers transfigured into enemies. After Margaret’s marriage to Yoshi, she discovered him to be an unlucky gambler and a sloppy drinker. And though he remained muscle-bound, she often thought him too short. There were moments over the years where she fantasized Lilly had outsmarted her, somehow tricked her into a marriage she knew could swiftly stale. Though it was difficult to hold those sorts of grudges against a girl simple as Lilly.

Perhaps a lack of a rival was the problem, Margaret thought. Marriage had turned her soft, uninspired. When was the last time she had practiced her scales? When was the last time she’d presented a flower arrangement? Of course the

options for flowers were greatly diminished in Gila River. But varieties of rocks and bark and succulents were abundant.

In the weeks that followed, Margaret underwent a conversion. She woke in the dark, and in the latrines, practiced her singing. She studied her echoes for imperfections in her pitch and timbre. If she was interrupted, she walked to the Methodist church and sang to the empty pews. In order to strengthen her vocal cords, she relentlessly hummed during work and through meals. She drank concoctions of cider vinegar and honey. She wrapped her throat in hot towels. She held her face over steaming bowls of ginger water. At night, she no longer made love to her husband, because she sensed that regular orgasms made her too undisciplined during the day.

She asked the mess halls for their discarded mayonnaise canisters, and in them she accumulated petrified leaves, bones, pebbles, berries, seed pods, the scooped-out carapaces of beetles. Anything that might work as decoration. She picked every desert flower she came across, and bundled them in mason jars. Her shelves swelled with failed arrangements. Yoshi began complaining that the pollen was giving him hay fever. So Margaret began placing some of her handiwork on the desks of coworkers. Soon she was receiving compliments for her creative expression, her ability to suggest verdant hills and valleys using minimal items.

Through her regimen, Margaret felt as though she was regaining some of the ground she'd surrendered to Alice Aoki. She wondered if she outdid Alice on every level, might she perform a tiny version of murder? Wasn't that what Alice sought after with all her accolades? To erase the virtues of others her by installing herself as a minor deity?

Three months from when Margaret first set eyes on the photograph, she received word that Alice would be visiting the Courier's office. Dennis Shimabukuro, Lilly's older brother, and Alice were placing their wedding announcement for the following week. Margaret was stunned when she heard the news. Dennis was without peer in his kindness, but he was also ugly. Margaret had only to hold his

name against her tongue to remember the ghoulish face, the crooked teeth, the unfashionable shirts. As long as Margaret and Lilly had been friends, Dennis had worshipped Margaret like a beaten dog. Now he was subjecting her doppelganger to the same affections. It was mildly offensive a woman of Alice's talents would settle for man in Dennis's condition. Of course, she wouldn't have counted on Lilly to intervene. Lilly did not understand what comprised an appropriate match for lovers. If Lilly had had it her way, Margaret would be trapped in the same predicament.

On the one hand, Margaret was compelled to rescue Alice. Any number of fibs could sour Dennis's reputation. She could say Dennis was aggressive with her. That he'd once slid his hand up her dress. She could say he was a liar or a private drunk. She could say he was cruel to animals. That he'd once struck her family's dog with his car and never confessed.

A dead dog anecdote could be difficult to weave into a casual conversation. Margaret also wondered if Alice would be receptive to this sort of confrontation. Lilly would've slandered her to Alice by now. Implicating her as the cause of her failed romance with Yoshi. Margaret let herself fantasize a violent confrontation. The two of them caught in one of the Courier's empty offices. Alice yanking her by the shoulder, feeling the heat of Alice's face held uncomfortably close to her own.

– Lilly told me some things about you, you filthy cow, she would say. If you ever come near my husband, I'll tear the vocal cords from your throat and sling them over the fence.

But then Alice must've had a sound reason for agreeing to marriage. What could it be? Dennis's family had no money. Their farm and property were stripped before internment. Had the Shimabukuro family inherited a secret fortune? Was there property or a family connection Margaret had no knowledge of? Was Alice a whore for pity? Was there a ploy to make her own beauty more apparent by standing beside a man so beastly? Had she become accidentally pregnant? Was Alice attempting to strike jealousy in a former lover that refused to marry her?

The best course of action was to avoid meeting Alice. Whatever Alice's intentions for becoming a member of the Shimabukuro family, an encounter with her at this juncture was risky. She would feign a stomachache and take a long walk around the race track before returning home. But as Margaret entered the editorial offices, she found herself eye to eye with the woman whose reputation had tormented her these past months.

Margaret had expected a slightly more mature woman. But in the flesh, Alice looked at least five years her junior. Alice's features did not impress her in the way she'd anticipated. Alice could only be called nearly pretty, and was far taller than her photograph implied. Margaret knew Alice's height alone made her inaccessible to most men. Margaret had discovered men despised tall women, and complimented them frequently only to obscure their jealousy. Alice was also thinner and less feminine than her photograph implied. And at a glance she might appear refined, but if one inspected her closely it was clear her clothes were outdated and had been altered by hand.

– I didn't realize you were busy, Margaret said. But just as she turned to leave, Henri entered the office and placed a hand on her shoulder.

– Margaret, this is the woman you were asking about. Alice Aoki. Henri stepped away from their eye-line as they nodded to each other. It's incredible you haven't met. I was only just saying the two of you have a number of common interests.

– Good lord, the editor said. The two of them even look a bit similar? Don't you think?

Yes, Henri said. Around the eyes. I think I see that.

As Alice stepped between Margaret and Henri, Margaret had to steel herself from recoiling. She sensed the dread of two discrete realities being erased for the existence of a single, mongrel reality.

– Yes, I've wanted to meet you for some time, Alice said. A number of people told me the two of us could be sisters.

Alice briefly reached out. Then she pulled her hand back and touched her own cheek.

– I think it was too kind a compliment, she said. You have to be the most beautiful girl I've ever seen. As Alice brought her hand to rest on Margaret's shoulder, Margaret felt the color drain from her face. My sister-in-law Lilly told me some lovely things about you. I hope the three of us spend some time together soon.

Alice waved goodbye to Henri. And at the sight of her leaving, Margaret shuddered and nearly collapsed.

## soapberry wasp, thundercloud plums

Margaret Morri met the devil in person just once. It was in a standalone barrack, partially hidden beside an oddly lush and vibrant copse of trees, and the ground blanketed in leaves that were ovate, serrated, blackened by age. And though the trees bore ripe fruit, enormous thundercloud plums, their skins fissuring and gurgling thickly with honey, the crows and ants of Gila River wanted no part of them. The red plums swelled, their sugar broke free and ran down, darkening the sand.

This outlying barrack and the copse of trees stood at the very edge of the northwest block, the furthest point from a guard tower, and was where Margaret went to collect petrified leaves, bones, pebbles, berries, seed pods, the scooped-out carapaces of beetles. Anything that could work as decoration in a flower arrangement. Margaret's grandmother had been a celebrated master of Ikebana, and during their internment in Arizona, she passed the practice on to Margaret.

He was standing out in front his barrack, picking his teeth with a metallic splinter that glinted as it pivoted between his fingers. Though the temperature was ninety degrees and rising, he wore a three-piece suit, dark umber, sharkskin jacket buttoned, with a fine, lilywhite handkerchief swelling over his pocket like foam climbing from agitated champagne. He actually did not look much like a devil to Margaret. The person he resembled most was the Reverend Kenichi Toguri from the Methodist Church back in Venice Beach. He was muscular and vaguely handsome, his eyes wide and light gray, flecks of charcoal in his irises.

– I've gathered a few boughs with plum blossoms over there for you, he said to Margaret. He gestured to a nearby basket laden with wiry branches and a pyramid of dark, bulging fruit.

– I think you recognize me, don't you, he asked.

Margaret nodded.

– Good lord you look much younger in person, Margie. How old are you? Are



you just eleven? Twelve?

Margaret stared at him, but gave no response.

– You remember me from the dreams you’ve been having, he asked.

Margaret nodded.

– And you remember what I told you, he asked.

Margaret nodded.

– That’s good, he said. You have a fabulous memory, Margie. If you remember what I told you, then I suppose you’re carrying them now. Can you let me see them?

From her pocket, Margaret retrieved three human teeth. They were flat and heavy and were embedded with gold fillings. She held them out and let them fall, one by one, into his outstretched hand.

– Thank you very much, Margaret, he said. The person whom these belonged to will be very happy to see them again.

– Because you’ve brought me this gift, he said, I will let you have a gift of your choosing. What would you like your gift to be?

Margaret coughed into her fist and tested her voice. She’d been wondering if he’d ask her this question. He’d promised her favors during the nights before, and she’d fantasized about them since. But never while she was awake, never while she was so close she could smell the cologne against his skin.

– What sort of a gift is allowed, Margaret asked.

– Well, he said, I think you know I have my fingers in many pies, Margie. What sort of a pie will match your appetite?

– If it can be any gift, Margaret said, there is a guard who sits in the southern tower.

– Oh? The tower guard of the south patrol. Strong. Handsome.

– I’d like it if he had an accident, Margaret said.

– An accident, he said.

– I’d like it if when he goes into his tower tonight, and he reaches for a

cigarette, and he pulls back the lid of the container, there is a scorpion that crawls onto his hand. And he becomes so startled and frightened he tumbles out of the tower.

– It would be a very long tumble, he said.

– A long tumble, Margaret said.

His face turned melancholy. He closed his eyes and shook his head.

– You surprised me, Margie, he said. You disappoint me.

– Did I say the wrong thing, she asked.

– This sort of favor. People think it is what I want. But it doesn't give me the sort of pleasure you'd expect.

– There are other things I want, she said. This is just the first thing I want.

– I'm afraid the gift is simply too expensive for you, Margie, he said. And I'm afraid the guards in these towers are protected by power beyond you and me.

– But I think I have something you will quite like, he said. Please hold out your hand. And don't be frightened by what you see.

He reached into his vest pocket, and produced an enormous blue-black wasp with bright, angular wings. Then he set the wasp in the center of Margaret's palm.

– Have you ever seen a tarantula hawk before, he asked her.

In response, Margaret raised the wasp to her eyes.

– They've very intelligent, he said. And intensely loyal. This one has been my companion for many years now.

– He eats raw meat and drinks the nectar from soapberries. Sometimes when the berries are fermented, he'll even become quite drunk and talkative. But when a young woman like yourself feeds him, and sings to him, he can continue to grow forever. And he will protect you at night from bad dreams.

– And in a few years, after he matures to adulthood, he will be able to trade his life for the life of any man. He is absolutely willing to sacrifice himself for you in that way. But by then, you might find yourself very attached to him. I know I have.

– Come to think of it, he said, if I don't see you again for ten years, he will be large as a puppy.

He lifted the basket of blossoming branches and fruit and placed its wicker handle in the crook of Margaret's elbow.

– There now, he said. Take those home. Your grandmother will know the right sort of arrangement for them.

And then he patted his vest pocket, and it clinked with the teeth Margaret had given him. And he turned away, and disappeared down the narrow blackness of his barrack.

## **an ocean**

Yoshikane Araki was conceived near the Southeast barracks atop a frayed blanket, spread over scorpion molt and scalding desert stones, and as Youko Araki carried him through those torrid months, she spoke to him through her belly, of her family's home beside the coastline, the aroma of the sea strong as an arrangement of sour flowers held to her face, the monstrous blacklip abalone clinging within rocky crevasses, the feral dogs who burrowed in saltmud and tore through sandcrabs, all she could remember, every gull song and whale song, every sea succulent and blossom, and on the day of Yoshikane's birth, when Youko opened her legs to deliver, an entire ocean rushed forth and submerged the Gila Relocation, the hospital, the mess hall, the chapel, the barracks overrun by whelk and toxic jelly and sardine, so that it took her three days search by rowboat to recover the infant Kane, found swaddled in kelp and froth and fish spittle, suckling the coil of a limpet as though it was his mother's nipple.

## **an october**

Yoshikane Araki passed away in October 1944, stretched upon a military cot, at the age of sixty-four, and in the presence of his wife, Margaret, his three exquisite daughters, their husbands, and with the sounds of his grandchildren laughing and chasing one another just outside the wooden frame of the Araki family barracks.

– His final perplexing words to his family were, I don't want you to worry. You take it off when you need to take it off.

Then Kane smiled, and used the last of his strength to push himself onto his side so he was facing the Western wall, and went free.

At the instant of his death, his youngest, prettiest daughter, Hanna Kawafuchi, pulled the wedding ring from her finger and gripped it against her palm. Only weeks prior, Hanna had come to Kane to discuss the possibilities of her divorce. Hanna was married to Edward Kawafuchi, a serious but loving man, and though she recognized in him all the qualities she wanted in a father for her children, relocation to Gila River had given Hanna the opportunity to reconcile with her High School lover, Ken Fukuhara.

Kane had always been very kind and generous with Edward. He'd taken him to a tailor to buy his first suit. He'd helped the Kawafuchi family to secure loans and farmland. He'd paid for and nailed together the planks that would become the Kawafuchi Farms fruit and vegetable stand. Hanna felt certain Kane would admonish her for reconnecting with Ken. The Fukuharas were known for being a loud and intemperate bunch. Back in Santa Maria, Ken's father and brothers were either banned or avoiding debts throughout most of Tiger Town, a small strip of Japanese-owned bars and restaurants. In High School, Hanna had often found Ken with his shirts torn away at the collar, his teeth stained red following a brawl, defending the reputation of his family.

– What I admire of Edward, Kane had said to Hanna, is I know he sacrifices his time and strength to make you happy. You wanted to own your home instead of leasing one. You wanted a car and a radio. I watched him kneel in the dirt and work those extra hours on another family's farm to give those things to you. And when Edward sees you happy, he has amnesia for those hours in the fields. He can just live in that moment. That is his gift. Lots of men can do the work, but very few can forget what they need to forget. They become resentful of their families. Edward's great joy in life is to make you and his children happy. You've made sacrifices for Edward too, obviously. Does seeing him happy give you any satisfaction?

– I want Edward to be happy, Hanna had said. But making him happy isn't my joy or my mission. When I see my children with their father, I feel happy. But after that, my happiness, his happiness, they never are aligned.

– Will Ken make sacrifices for your happiness, Kane asked.

– I think he will, Hanna said.

– How does he prove to you that he will, Kane asked.

– He promises me he will never be with another woman. He says he will just live to wait for me. And if I leave Edward, if I want him then, only then will he allow himself to be in love with someone. Only then does he want his own children.

– Then there are a lot of lives at stake besides yours, Edward's and Ken's, Kane said. There is the happiness of the children you have. Then there are the children you may have if you remarry.

– Those children don't exist, Hanna said.

– It doesn't mean you shouldn't consider them, Kane said.

– If I divorced Edward, would you feel ashamed of me, she asked.

– For years I spent all the shame on myself. There is nothing left for you. You care about living a happy life, and that makes me think some things about me being a father were right.

– What do I need to do?

– I won't give you an answer for that, Kane said. The decision doesn't belong to me. Don't trust a person who says they can give that to you.

– Mom says I should stay with Edward.

– She says it out of love for your children. She doesn't want to upset them.

– I feel afraid. I'm afraid of both choices.

– Of course, Kane said, you can't ask for simple answers when you're pushing around problems so complicated.

– He is going to hate me, Hanna said. Edward is going to despise me so much. He may even try to kill me.

– You don't have to feel afraid, Kane said.

– Kane said, of course you know, your mother was involved with another man when I met her.

– Yes, Hanna said.

– You understand I almost wasn't your father. If I had met your mother a month later . . . if she'd never agreed to take a walk with me . . . you understand?

– She made the right decision.

– She chose me because she could hear you calling to her. It was very faint, but she told me when I was near, she could hear your voice. She could hear the voice of our daughters. Your mother loves me, and I'm so undeserving of it. She would've been happier with the man she loved before me. I wasn't good to her. I left her alone too often, and I drank too much. But she dreamt of your voice. It was saying to choose me. When you dream, what do you hear?

– I don't remember any of my dreams, Hanna said.

– There are ghost families near us. Ghost families that could never happen because your mother and I stayed together. We are all haunted because of it.

– I want children with Ken, Hanna said. I think it's the thing I want most.

– We loved you the best we could, so you'd know how to be loved, Kane said. I can tell Edward loves you so much. If you say you know you will be loved again, I can believe you.

– How can I do this, she asked. This terrible thing to someone.

– You'll do it soon, Kane said. You'll do it after I'm gone. Edward will know he can't hurt you after that. And he won't try. And in a few months, you'll make plans to leave the colony with your children. You'll go to Chicago or to Detroit. Your mother's sister is there. And Ken will follow you. Edward won't be able to leave his family in Gila River. His sister is as sick as me. Edward will stay in Gila until the war ends. He'll move back to California to run his family's farm. And by that time, you and Ken will be settled.

– Kane looked down at himself and asked, I've worn this shirt three days in a row now. Do I look nice in it? Your mother seems to like me better when I wear it. But when I ask her why, all she tells me is sometimes I miss a button.

Hanna checked his shirt and patted him on the chest.

– You look good, Dad, she said.

– Handsome? Good.

– And then Kane said, it must really be Fall. In my dreams I can see what's nearly ready. I'm starting to see figs, kabocha and persimmons.



## HOGG BOOK

## **about the author**

Kiik A.K. does not perform often. But when he does it is an awful performance. We would like him to get out more or even leave his bedroom. But his bedroom is where pornography is. Especially a naked cowboy riding a green tractor. Pricing is customized to your needs. Under normal circumstances something happens that obligates him to give all your money back. Contact Kiik for weddings, baptisms, funerals, circumcisions. But please never in that order. His limits may surprise you. As you watch a man die his foreskin turns to rust. The dust convulsing off a moth's bulb paints the spirit in a thin gold film.

## jackie chan

Kendall Grady says the denial of interstellar space travel  
Is *extreme naked sadness*  
Sadness is it naked because  
Whilst the body travels at warp speed  
The clothes remain static in the field  
And oddly still in the shape  
Of the person hurtling through space  
Do Nightcrawler's clothes also conveniently  
Have superpowers and does that count  
As a very breathable very synchronized sidekick  
Does a parrot count as a sidekick  
It won't save you just like a sidekick  
Sidekicks just can be so clingy  
Jesus shit Robin go find yr own narrative  
Can a person turn 30 on February 20th, 2013  
And suddenly contract borderline mental retardation  
I think I used to be smart  
Now I'm only haunted by  
Whatever you call this  
I don't buy ghosts  
But sometimes if I've been drinking  
I go into yr closet and hug and kiss yr coats  
My sadness is extreme sports also can be extreme  
It follows my sadness is extreme sport  
Which I prove by danger that was very avoidable  
Frequent humiliations my body skids through  
Yet so far has remained so much less televised  
My sadness is the Jackie Chan of extreme sports  
No let me revise  
Jackie Chan is becoming the Jackie Chan of my sadness  
Some people get so competitive with sadness  
No sooner have I lost my grandma  
My friend has got a missing arm or leg  
That is not a whole being I know  
But hypothetical limbs have  
Far fewer miles before they sleep  
In a better poem I do some very  
Complicated grandma-depreciation calculations  
This is not going to solve space travel

I'm so sorry, Kendall  
This did not tell you what I wanted you to know  
I think I've taken too many pills  
I want to come to you to tell you about my pills  
Then Bear Grylls always eats something more terrifying

## **sara bazej endlessly**

Kendall Grady says Sara Bazej is on the cutting floor  
And I am the gumshoe

I got naked and studied myself holding a mirror  
Sort of squatting and owling my neck near paralysis

My god I said to all the children  
In the daycare watching me that moment

Kendall was right  
I am gumshoe

Sara Bazej unspools like  
A hanky of silkflower / silkworm sneezing

Into a moth's peppered wing  
Sara Bazej flashes like a tail of gasoline

On the cutting floor she is  
A swallow's bed of flash string / feather nest

Of guncotton / gelatin and cellulose / camphor and silver  
On the cutting floor

Sara was never the mummy  
Always the gauze

Infinite / shining / thirsty as salt / combustible  
As perfume on bathwater

Sara Bajez endlessly beautiful and tragic  
For someone without musical ability

I place tremendous importance  
On writing potential album titles

A message ribboned to a bird lost in the air forever  
I have been decaying considerably even since this morning

I squeezed into the paper box  
I said time machine

Take me to Sara Bazej  
I emerged from my nap

An hour older / sweatier / arms floppy  
And radiating with blood

All my sniffing around the body  
All my dreaming beside a shrine of crime tape and chalk

How large and unappealing  
My okcupid profile has become

It is no shock my closet is cramped  
With trenchcoats to hide my nakedness

It is no shock I've changed my headshot  
To a picture of my houseplant

Fuck you the future outside my paper box  
I am trying to get home

I am trying to get back to Sara  
Posed like a trail of milk down my chest

Sara Bazej on the cutting floor  
Cut short she seems even more immortal and unreachable

Nobody asked me to pose that is my one great regret  
In this life that is one great shortcoming of this world

I carry that all to my paper box  
I stuff it all into the engine

## a mask

It is not good to murder or hunt people  
Not in the forest not anywhere  
Where the owl sips rain from his robe of moss  
And the deer tongues his limpets dry of broth  
Hunting people isn't very nice  
I want to play very nice the bible is clear on this  
Or should be or else I need my money back Jesus  
Though if forced to hunt someone I would hunt a psychic  
Angela says their meat is delicious  
But that is not my reason  
I am not in it to make my soup  
I think it is the most fair  
To pit my nets my gas-operated assault rifles against  
Their cat-like reflexes and superpowers  
Already I have killed a dozen or so psychics  
They were not real psychics obviously  
Because you cannot do anything to a psychic they don't want done  
You cannot even fondle a psychic unless they like that  
In which case you've just become actors  
Performing what a fondling might look like  
I may never find the psychic I've been searching for  
He'll see me coming and smother my face with a baggie or cushion  
A psychic gets you before you get him we call it revenge  
The sheet that grapples your face you shake it out  
How long does it remember your shape  
A psychic could wear a mask  
Unless he knew the hunter in me  
Was destined to touch the meat of him  
I respect a man devoted to a clear timeline of his existence  
I say I will eat of your timeline  
You will become a portion of my timeline  
Destiny it is a mild form of paralysis  
A way of saying death is already happening  
My future bobbing in the distant scum  
I may want to protest  
Do not tell me my fortune was to protest  
It is disconcerting a psychic has power to evaluate  
What is destiny and what was desire

## **a wholly separate creature**

A man never gets more sleep than after he has done a lot of killing

I've seen a lot of research on this

Mostly movies about men and revenge

A man comes home after a night of killing

And is overtaken by sleepiness

Sometimes he takes a shower

To rinse speckles of gore from his beard and crevices

A close shot of bloody clothes straggled on the floor

To show he has just metamorphosed from a wholly separate creature

And then he takes a long, long sleep

I think it must be the feeling of accomplishment

A man could not have done anything more worthwhile in a sense

Anything that better demonstrated the autonomy of his will

I imagine he must feel entitled to good sleep after that

Sometimes he gets the love of a good woman after killing

And then the two sleep like tired wolves

Two wolves swaddled, filled by the meat of grandma

So maybe it is the love of a good woman that makes a man tired

After he has made himself worthy of her love

By all that brutal killing and vengeance

Maybe it is the men who take the highest risks



Are entitled to the highest rewards  
Eating the most pussies of clean, virtuous women  
Eating their assholes on special occasions  
Say after murdering a gangbanger  
Or murdering a gangbanger's wife and daughters  
Then dozing into his work day  
Dreaming his favorite dream  
Where every murderable person is taken down  
Into a basement and mutilated  
And the men that designed the punishment  
Come back to the same dream every night  
And make the dream stronger  
Until they can live inside it

## **a basin**

The bees are washing themselves in honey  
All night I listened through a cloth sack  
A song of sour bread dunked into wine  
Dark handful of grapes heavy a breast sweeter  
Than ripe carried like a black sugar to the mouth  
Grandmother all night I listened for your knife  
To relieve the sagging vines  
I listened for your fruit to crush the water underfoot  
For your nipple to nurse sugar  
Back to the wounded vine  
Grandfather of eight legs  
I listened to you pummel a basin of grapes  
Your hair and beard running with cold wine with sweat  
Your toes swelling over the fat of summer  
The sun falling drunk and naked into your tub  
Night staggering through your strip of light  
Grandfather of stale bread  
Grandfather reddened in ink  
Frightened grandfather a wine-stained animal

## **the reconciliation**

Through the gas-soaked flesh  
And the fish sulfur  
Of this house

Through flutebone  
And mudbone

Through the reconciliation  
Of iron / Splinter / Beak of fire

And the exposure  
Of my ghost  
To acid / To fumigation / To suffocation

To the eviction  
Of my ghost

And the starvation  
Of my ghost

May this fin  
Of horse flesh  
Between your teeth

Extinguish your effigy  
Deliver your effigy  
From harassment / Tar / Arrow

Deliver black amnesia  
Here as I hold the glove of live current  
Like a bouquet of goldenrod

And I dissolve you  
From your ghost

On the tongue  
Of my father's fever

In the verse  
Of blood mouse  
And of spume

## **the resignation**

Wholesaler of my blindfold / Rubber curtain

My snout brimming with river

Through the exorcism of these sheets

Through submersion of these sheets in rabbits blood

Sopped and strangled bleach / Antiseptic / Goats milk

Resigned myself to the animation of my sheets

A ghost does not understand what is not his uniform

For the ferns I ignited and shook

For the wreath of garlic slung like a gorilla around my neck

Through the eternal drool of this nest / This basket

Of seagrass / This craft

Turning over / Swigging the icy muck

May you discharge your dirty water

May your ghost find his path to salvation

Bumping into every frail vase and urn

Headfirst into any metal prong or pan

With likelihood of clattering

You will not be steered or dented

By the broom I pummel you with

And I absolve you from my premature baldness

In the fashion of my father's ski mask

In the fashion of my father's pentimento

In my father's bath of choked lice / Of turpentine

## about the author

Kiik A.K.'s work has been translated into sixteen languages. Kiik performed the translations himself, even though he's never been able to learn a foreign language and is mildly illiterate in English. The translations exist mostly as conjectures of what Kiik's voice might do if he was a Swedish or Chinese, etc. As a result the Swedish and Chinese work is very clever. A literary critic once wrote, *Kiik please stay out of my garden, I need those vegetables to make soup*. In his pocket the locks of twelve children. Doused and scoured using twelve emulsions, milky, swampy, perfumed. In his garden a row of twelve scalped turnips. Pale ghost-riders. Paw of snowmelt resting on its heart of mud.

## the coat

I wouldn't know what to do with a dead child  
I'd uproot her moss and wring the blossoms  
I'd suck out the rain very cold and tangy  
And stuff her fingers like figs into my mouth  
I have nowhere to hang her clothes  
We lie beside them like shadows  
I fell into the blackened woodpile of widowmakers  
I burrowed into the husk of early melons  
Heart you are a sack of red dust  
Nipple you are a rosy cocoon spitting rust  
I wrapped her fish in a coat of snails  
And handed it back to her mother  
Snail you a rose from a rim of mud  
I carried the fire in its devotion back to the wood  
Burn how you must

## **that is what the books are for**

There are books on how to starve children  
They are not such long books but we have them  
Parents get busy their arms get sore  
And cannot finish beating what they started  
That is what the books are for  
To beat those children is closer to entertainment  
But starvation means less work for you  
Starvation is so much cheaper than anything  
Children are expensive even funerals  
Such brief pickling so little wood  
Stretched and glued into a basin  
The best thing about starvation is they never see it's coming  
A child jigs sometimes bleeds to impress a meal  
And they only starve faster  
Of course you will be compelled to beat them  
What with yr energy shooting through the roof  
Yr muscles oiled, rested  
More hours in the gym flexing or cooking meat  
You get to the point you don't need the books anymore  
That is our gift to you  
That and a coupon for a very tiny cadaver pouch  
Children are our future  
That is why we must probe the Internet carefully  
Almost everywhere online has something approximately child  
Some which suckle yr dusty milk  
It is a blessing to funnel yr lightning  
This insect heart  
This fleshy bean  
And watch it grow into something approximately yr child  
You may think similarly of those children throwing  
Themselves against yr cellar door  
But you'd be mistaken  
Those children are wild and dangerous



## genius

When someone tells me her child is displaying genius behavior  
I get so excited I pee a little  
When I extrapolate sometimes I pee my pants  
When she says, she is two and speaking complete sentences  
I say, Einstein was seven before he could talk  
And, God what a retard  
If she says, he is six and already has a job  
Squeezing lemons into a bucket of sugar  
I say, Jesus never had a job until thirty  
And, think what's possible here  
Every day I think the earth is getting better  
Every day the past grows more rotted under shitty leaves  
Children are reading dictionaries at three  
As did my cousin Arthur who twice survived  
Addictions to redneck's butter and the white pony  
Not meaning the dictionary has got anything  
To do with amphetamine abuse  
But it could have on survival  
Survival is harder all the time  
I think it is because we are all getting better  
Not only intelligence but appearances too  
People have been saying to me their son  
Or daughter is going to be exceptionally beautiful  
I believe it I tell them O I've been watching him!  
And, I can't wait to make that young lady my wife!  
If someone comes to me, crying, says her child  
Doesn't compute speak walk  
Looks like he'll never be handsomer  
Than the sack of smashed assholes he now is  
I tell them I have one friend who pushed too hard  
Her kid worked her digits to the bone  
Got hooked on hillbilly salt  
Got abducted and impregnated  
Got crucified for the afterlives of sinners  
Life is not a race  
Slow horses, quick horses  
Get equal tethers from the edges  
Of their gates to the Kumamoto slaughterhouses  
Remember my poor Aunt Minnie  
The police arriving one morning to tell us  
She'd been abused by a necrophilia

It is the chronology of some people not to lose  
Their virginity until five years after they die  
Nobody rises in flames without their nest of ash

## **pomegranate**

I realize I am one instant in the sequence of scraps  
My mother ate a mouse, I came out of her a little mouse  
I swallowed a cricket, the noise I sang was partly cricket  
When I strike down another man  
It is something like I've watched my father do before  
When I am struck I fall into my father's dustbin  
I understand I am one word passing through your eye  
Its debris feeding the hunger of every other word  
I know the voice is an invisible barb sent up  
Into the fray of ornithological tatters  
I know the wind measures the length of my voice  
By its longing to devour the next mouth  
Another sack of flour is carried through the crematorium  
The voice is rinsed in bathwater and ash  
The pomegranate spits hot blood on the sand  
I am bleeding into the bag my brother is wringing

## my ghost dissolves into despair

Kendall Grady makes me run a timed mile and swears  
On the man titties bounding in my cling wrap  
I am not my body  
Not in a metaphorical way  
But literally my body is nothing  
And I don't own it  
That thing I currently name my existence  
Is really a collection of hothouse tomatoes  
I force into a claustrophobic sack with drawstrings  
And feel them juggled in me  
Like porpoises swelling in their brine  
O for years I abused myself  
I put the oil in the basket  
I put the blubber and caramel in the basket  
Assuming my days of the timed mile were over  
But you know they never are over  
So long as a woman arrives  
Skimming on a little raft  
Of sea spittle holding a stopwatch  
Kendall Grady says of my mile time  
*A weak bee dissolving / into skid marks like a dandelion*  
I am not sure if I am the bee  
Or the skid marks  
I am not sure if it means my running was not enough fast  
Or so fast she became worried for my health  
For my elemental glues  
Forces that hold flesh and ectoplasms  
Into a single purse  
It's true the bee is weak and no one likes waiting for their honey  
Holding up the exposed fluff of their biscuit  
And becoming skid marks seems in reference  
To my stink, neglect, shame of rotting in public  
My rapidly approaching senility  
But that I am like a dandelion  
The diaphanous lamp of a trillion bearded pods  
And though my ghost dissolves  
Into despair and nothingness  
The act of dissolution produces a wish  
A potential for future fleshiness  
That poises beside Kendall Grady's mouth

## **about the author**

Kiik A.K. absolutely did not write his own biography. O good lord no. He was away working on more urgent things. Hosing down burning orphans most likely. It's true Kiik spent thirty years writing his book. How he was surprised to find clowns are sometimes sad on the inside. He didn't have time for his biography of all things. Why that'd be like a stalker perched in a tree outside his own window. A person who knew nothing of Kiik wrote it. An intern who googled him. Kiik had been once trampled by porpoises and died. But recovered in his decorative bodycast. He'd been attacked – in prison – by bees. And those bees raped him over and over. Kiik A. K.'s intern was educated at Berkeley and Santa Clara University. She holds a doctorate in comparative literature. And in the opposite hand an enormous rosemallow of soiled gauze. All night the stitches sputter and weep and crystallize. Cork of blood sailing past the rivers of salt. All night embalmed in honey. All night the name ignited and dissolved.

## a sonnet

The greatest contribution a man  
Can make to this world  
Is to die young, fat and naked  
In the woods  
That was always the purpose  
Of every living creature  
To walk these nutrients around a while  
So they don't spoil in the sun  
To wolf down the asparagus  
And the aardvark  
And lap at yr mitten  
Of venom and honey  
And then to die  
Feed the forest of wasps  
On that dumb rotting corpse  
A horse will chew yr hair off like it's grass  
A bear will take yr arm to a cave  
It'll be waving to every animal  
In the forest from its jaws  
More carcass meat lying by those loose stones  
A crow will snatch the coins  
From yr eyes greedy crow  
Maybe he stole yr eyelids  
Every dead body the animals see  
They throw a party  
Yr girlfriend she will be a little sad or whatever  
But everyone else will be at this party  
Chowing down  
Yr cadaver is like a Sadie Hawkins to them  
A monkey picks yr penis up off the floor  
Touches it to the face  
Of some buddy that's passed out  
Everybody has a good laugh  
I think that is why every person is being assholes  
They forgot they already  
Were supposed to be dead  
Somewhere we decided  
We weren't supposed to die  
Only the idea of immortality  
Is what separates us from animals  
No other creature takes a brief opportunity

At consciousness for granted but people  
You ever think a goat went around  
Kicking a chair  
Which for them a chair is the dirt  
Kicking it just because somebody else  
Probably a donkey didn't love it back  
O unattainable donkey  
Bewitching donkey  
I would not suffer your tender wiles  
Feel that sun shining on yr horn  
See those peapods bursting in yr  
Weird creepy fish eyes  
Here, eat this tin can  
Were you looking for a sonnet  
This is not a sonnet  
Why you are fat I don't care  
Just do it  
Why you are naked in the woods  
I don't care just do it  
I don't wish you get drugged or violated  
I only hope you die I only hope  
You really mean something

## **a messenger**

Eating I forgot is also about getting nutrition  
And amino acids and waters  
Stuffing all that back in my body  
Do you think if the scarecrow got hungry  
He would eat straw??  
Are you thinking a crow forces its tail  
Into a scarecrow's mouth??  
Eating for me is about sacrificing my body  
For the cheap thrills of my mouth  
My body says am I your dirty coat  
You give pills and rub upon the carpet??  
I was a messenger from God  
And you made me into the plum of the pig's clit  
We will both die but only I will be saved  
Churned up into rocks  
Into fish and butter  
Maybe I will be a bird!!  
Maybe a propeller made of wax  
But you will be gone and a corpse of snails  
I do so much I open my eyes and get you soap  
You do not even give me vitamins or kale for my work  
What can you do for intervention??  
Do you kick him in the vagina??  
Do you refuse to hunt or bring him another lubricant??  
That is called sacrifice  
But I think as for my body  
You are no temple to offer fruit before  
You are no absolute I cannot buy a machine  
To make thinner or pointier  
I say I'd give it all  
I'd give it all for fifteen minutes alone  
With fifteen gallons of ice cream  
And when I die I will kill you  
I will bury you in a garden or behind some bushes  
And we will both be forgotten  
And neither of us will be saved  
And the only messenger  
Will be that which we burned and ate



## bank robbery

I once loved a dead woman  
She was alive when I met her  
But I didn't love her then  
I loved her sometime later  
In dreams she sought me out and  
I got to know her better  
She lost weight too  
And loosened up sexually  
Now she's dead  
Then she was too  
But not before not when I did not love her  
In my memories of her I am never in love  
I was always thinking you have a smelly scarf  
And mangy hair  
Why do you let your dog chew your scarf  
When you will see me later and have just one scarf  
Now I think if she were here  
I would pack my mouth with her hair  
I would sip the yarn from her dog's mouth  
At the foot of her living bed  
I would eat all her clothes  
Until she was only naked  
And always fucking me out of her nakedness  
I cannot revive her by my love  
Only my disinterest  
And somehow in dreams  
When I awaken my pillow has raped me  
Or maybe I raped but wasn't I unconscious  
It happens this way sometimes  
A man cuts off your leg  
And you dream your leg is asleep beside you  
It's true what they say about missing a leg  
You didn't know you loved  
You think you should have done more with it  
Maybe a little hop  
Sometimes it is like my love has killed her  
It didn't happen this way in life  
In life she was shot in a bank robbery  
She was robbing a bank  
I wanted you to know before you felt sorry for her  
This is not about all that

It is more about feeling sorry for someone else  
Me perhaps  
She died with a ski mask covering her face and hairdo  
Which I think is so sad  
Because she never went skiing ever  
Or saw the snow emptying so heavily out of the sky  
I told her I would take her skiing  
But I took Angela instead  
I took Angela and said I do not love you  
Now I don't dare ski  
Well sometimes I ski  
But not very fast  
Do you believe in ghosts  
On my bed I scratch the emptiness beside me  
And in my dream she says that feels good  
I think it is her  
Her back is to me that she cannot turn around  
Sometimes I turn around and pretend I do not dream  
But that is not really true  
That is just the amputee in me  
I fling to the sea  
And do not let float back

## eight inches

I don't think love can just go around  
Conquering anything it wants  
Love conquers some things

You hear about this sometimes  
A grandmother who lifts a car off a baby's  
Trapped and somewhat-flattened leg

The power of love is profound  
Why the driver couldn't pull eight inches forward  
Is also profound

The driver in shock after striking and  
Halting directly over a baby  
A baby that somehow had gotten dropped

In the street and was rolling around in traffic  
Sure flat baby allowed its grandmother  
An opportunity to lift the stunned driver in their car

Then both of her hands preoccupied to sort of  
Rescue-kick the baby out from under the tire  
You know it is only one grandmother's love

In ten that could do that  
The other nine grandmothers exploded their knees  
And their spines like sprung sacks of ghost flour

Then you got two helpless people rolling in the street  
No love is infallible  
Even my love that is the strongest one of all

My love did not conquer the women  
Who were assholeish to me  
No love is ten for ten

A lover that is ten for ten otherwise known as a rapist  
No you cannot conquer him by being funny  
Though once he became so offended by my gassiness

He picked up his wand his silk cloak and stormed out

Yes I know what you are thinking  
Kiik was raped by a magical wizard

Is it redundant to say magical wizard  
I don't remember his face  
He told me not to look at him

Since he was in his wetsuit of invisibility  
He felt naked and might've been lying about the wetsuit  
He might've even been a woman

He might've been pretending I was a woman too  
Someone she loved though she never admitted that  
Another problem with love is it can't conquer tattoos

I have a tattoo of a sea otter over my heart  
And in script LUCY ETERNALLY  
That's because Lucy loves sea otters

And should love me too  
But Lucy does not love me  
Lucy only loves herself and otters

And sometimes hippies with a lot of muscles  
Love cannot conquer my otter  
As my grandmother once said

Only muthafucking lasers can cure that shit muthafucker  
I didn't have enough cash for lasers  
So I got a tattoo of a dolphin on my lower back

And told him to scare the otter  
One day I hope my dolphin will  
Eat the shit out of that otter

So I can be free of Lucy's love of otters  
Then it will just be me and the dolphin  
And whatever's left he hasn't scared or eaten

## **a pheasant**

That magazine mailed me  
A ten-dollar check  
For the first stanza  
But this stanza I give to you  
Is worth nothing  
In the spirit of encouragement  
Take this ten dollars  
Buy yourself a soda  
Think about what could've happened  
To make this other thing better  
Both stanzas were somehow  
About pheasant  
Dipped in fire  
Plucked bird ripening over coals  
Skin raised  
In a dark sail of caramel  
Strangers blowing on the meat  
Licking the glaze on their fingers  
But one pheasant  
I'd wound with riddles  
I understand why  
He was the expensive pheasant  
As I know why  
Some roots and vegetables not wrapped  
In bacon aren't worth ordering  
But what's a riddle worth  
Once solved or even recognized  
And shrugged at  
So many friends  
Studied how to make money  
I was the only one  
Moron enough to study poetry  
About why the idea  
Of one pheasant  
Is worth more  
Than the ornaments  
Hanging off another  
This must be the ultimate  
Insult to my teachers  
To have revered  
Their every word

And to not have any success despite them  
To collect their plates  
And rub the poison around in circles  
And cast what's been gnawed  
Into buckets of tar and putrefaction  
To show raising your hand  
Means nothing  
Even the deal I could  
Get them on a pheasant  
There will always be a younger, leaner poet  
Willing to do my job cheaper

## **about the author**

Kiik A.K. was born in a carwash atop a little wad of foam. For thirty-five years he was a curtain and a mitten. A robotic arm bullwhipped him while he rubbed his naked body into the spittle and jetsam of filthy mechanical wagons. He made millions. Later Kiik was promoted to bullwhip. He worked as a wrist loop, a thong, a fall and a cracker. He made millions. In his sixties, he retired from being a cracker and stayed at home to raise a family. He sealed up his family in his basement. When he was not being a family man, he paid for someone with massive arms to visit his home and choke him until he fell unconscious. He made millions. He died at the age of eighty-three having never attempted a single poem. His genitals were a mollusk plucked and dissolved like a little star of borax in the black seltzer of heaven.

## the confirmation

Kendall Grady says of penises / *Its secret paw curls toward the atomizer like a question* / The paw acting as a secret / Not because it is clothed or it's so small / Or you cannot stretch into a comfortable position to view it / But because of what the paw *conceals* / The word *secret* only touches *paw* / In an attempt to salt and to flute the edges of the word / And not to bleach its genetic sugar / Paw is secret in the way a superhero's false-and-revolving door is a secret / It holds out one truth to disguise a deeper truth / That is why this poem is called *a deeper truth* / The paw's ferocity / Its promise of violence / Distracts from the ultimate truth of the animal / The inevitability of that animal's death / The foreskin attempts to cloak the most obvious feature of the penis / That such a small fragile nub of machinery / Divides the border / Between inexistence and reproduction / I do not mean to speak for all men on this point / There may be darker or more leathery nubs available / I'm only speaking on behalf of White and Asian men / Who have regular penises which are all small and generally ugly / So accurately is Kendall able to describe / What it's like to own a penis / And speak obsessively of its entertainment / It's impossible to believe she is not some sort of scientist / But instead is a virgin / *Its secret paw curls toward the atomizer like a question* / Atomizer so much cleaner than the way I visualize the urethra / Which is the anatomically Greek way of saying / The mouth of the wiener spout / Which I've just decided should be / The new title of this poem / The first image I see when my therapist calls out urethra / Is one of those leaky bottle Summer fan squeeze propeller misters / That you buy down at the 99-cent store / Which coincidentally is the store / Where the most men have shown me their penises / That number is 6 men / In the toy aisle / Why the paw curls like *a question* / Just as the bioluminescent leaves sag and mummify in Autumn / And the mole hibernates with his elephant garlic / So the penis when it deflates / Appears to ask will Spring be able to revive and unfurl the soggy lash like a new shoot / Does the sharpness of the post-ejaculatory retraction / Cloud the memory of the penis / Hampering the lever / the pulley / nerve fibers / buckets / Leaving the penis to guess was it all a dream / Or is your question with a penis so severely flaccid / The ebb and flow so much more intensely ebb / Is it difficult to confirm if there is existence / Which is more interesting than the answer



## henry ford

I've been paying a woman to come over and beat me

It is thrilling but it is not prudent

I have never been much good with money

If I had someone to love it would be cheaper

It being a thing I call my life

Who loved me and beatings were on the house

I have never shared myself with someone

I could not give money to go away

My body burns the way moths burn

I've a need to ransom my abuse

With the wheels of my soul that became satisfied

Virtue o you are a wheel I do not need

Elegance that is just a third kidney

As Henry Ford proclaimed, *find that which never breaks*

*And build that shittier*

Belly I will sell you so you do not starve me

Home I will find a heart to collar you

I've a need to move closer to the old axe

Each day I go unloved I am a little richer than the next

## another son

Kendall Grady told me go out  
And buy yrself a big black dildo

Can that possibly be what happened  
Well I bought it anyway Dad

If you'd even really call yrself my father if you'd  
Stop getting up from the show to go to the bathroom

Already I've been tarred / asphyxiated / combusted  
And Claude has mimed feeding me feces out of a bucket

So of course the ending made no sense to you  
Or did you even listen to my q&a

If you are not my dad well  
I'm still not going to dial this register back

You probably have another son  
You don't tell you love him enough

I brought the enormous black dildo  
In my npr tote bag

I guess it doesn't matter the brand of tote bag is npr  
Yet somehow it totally does matter

I don't care how many people at Grandma's funeral overhear me  
No I will not lower my voice around these children

You think this is a surprise to anybody  
Kendall Grady told me go out

And buy yrself a big black dildo  
It cost me 53 dollars and 63 cents

After the coupon after the mail-in rebate  
Here is the receipt I am shredding

I have no intention of taking it back

## lucrezia buti

Another pregnant nun another immaculate conception  
Haven't we stopped burning horny nuns  
Haven't I held the snug pudenda of a nun  
And thought it smelled of natron and myrrh  
So the pussies of ascetics are not ineffable after all  
You watched one only moments ago  
You singed its dainty beard with an ember  
Your friend he drew back one side of the cleft  
With a stick while you peered inside  
At least your mind did o yes that counts  
And it was the same rosy plum the doctors saw  
And kissed o the abbess would have that mons pubis flogged  
For speaking of it this way  
She would flog it, pray hunched over it  
Then off to be vacuum-sealed in air-tight panties  
Which this abbess sounds pretty kinky if you ask me  
Letting the moss grow rotted and wild  
Wanting that puss so dense and blackened it sucks  
The visible spectrum right out the bald human eye  
Have all our lepers been stolen from us our nuns have no one left to swab  
Has all our gruel been ladled our pilot bread mended  
There is nothing but to sit in a lockt room thinking unsexy thoughts  
Why did we board them up  
Why did we chew Lippo Lippi's legs and spoon bleach into his eyes  
His lover is starved at her window  
Her hair hanging down the side of the rocks like sea sickness  
That is the cost of purity  
Why should holiness condense upon a pristine vulva  
Like morning dew upon the spathe  
When did our attention grow so moist behind the grillwork  
Nuns are aborting in the gardens their thistles grow high as fever  
Their rutabagas clog the earth  
Nuns jump ship or find worse hysteria  
I saw a nun crouched in my alley I thought she was washing her socks  
She was drowning baby kittens in a bucket  
That is the cost of purity  
It can be measured in fur and bones

## **a condition**

A woman is such a big asshole  
When she's just being a big sexist  
You all know who I'm talking about  
A woman who thinks she can march around  
Spreading her message of anger and hostility  
A woman says look at the guy over there  
Guys will fuck anything that moves  
That is supposed to be a criticism  
Here is what that means  
A man is seen talking to another woman who  
Doesn't look exactly like the first woman who said that  
Not a drop of fucking has even happened yet  
Except in the sexist woman's mind  
That woman has got a condition we call an upset vagina  
A vagina gets upset because a man can love a woman  
Who isn't very tall skinny  
Or is too cheap to buy nice clothes  
Sure a man could love a woman that's maybe sort of dumb  
Sure men love non-white women of ambiguous ancestries  
What woman isn't dumb  
What woman hasn't got a little Rolfe in her  
What woman hasn't got a little bit of a drinking problem  
With a little bit of vomit in her hair at all times  
And fell asleep outside your dumpster  
Some women want to impose criteria  
Upon what a man should have his sex with  
Well that is a racist, ageist, sexist institution  
Men should be praised for loving a woman on her own terms  
A woman will not need to be just like his wife  
In fact he thinks it is even better if she is nothing like his wife  
I don't blame a woman for acting a sexist  
Sometimes they wear their bun too tight  
All that constricted blood flow  
Women are so fragile they get convinced they are fat and repulsive  
It's true some women are fat  
They get depressed no one calls them to be a model  
They eat a lot of chocolate therapy  
And look at pictures of cats on the internet  
Women should spend less time thinking  
About other women and more time on the Precor  
Getting healthier getting happier

Taking pictures of themselves in yoga pants  
Getting nearer to the truth  
All women are so special  
That is why none of them are  
In the most important way  
That all men would love them  
And would hump them  
Whether they are moving or not

## only vultures

I want you to think I am sensitive and  
Not only a asshole most of the time

I cry about things sometimes  
I cry so much when a dolphin is murdered

I cry about happy things too  
Susan Boyle sings really good

I think what a magnificent noise  
Coming from that disheveled woman's face

Think what's possible if the singer  
Is actually more hotter

That is the definition of a angel  
When a woman stuns you twice

First by being attractive  
And then by having another quality

She's a doctor  
Or says funny things

She didn't hear from anywhere else  
She thought them with her actual mind

Stunning women are life's great miracles  
Dolphins are number two followed by magicians

Disheveled women have their role too  
But they don't exactly make me doubt

A cruel random nucleus is swallowing  
Our universe from its own fucking asshole

Is there God or only vultures  
Waddling with their pincers out?

I don't think I'm perfect  
I go to the gym a perfect amount

But I'm still probably only a 8 or a 9  
That's for white women

Asian woman standards I get somewhat better  
But could you ever truly call a Asian trustworthy?

I am changing my mind on this all the time  
I know I could never marry or be driven by a Asian

But could I ever actually value what a Asian thinks  
Of my existence moving around on its muscles

You shouldn't think all I do is go to the gym and get strong  
I am no vampire to avoid looking at my reflection

I like to laugh and look out at the stars  
What do you think is out there?

I do think sometime in our lifetime  
I will have to fight a alien

Do you think he will be all slimy?  
I will have to fight him and maybe I'll die

I hope I die deflecting his slime to save you  
I hope I cook down beside you

As I sit up my face somehow still fastened to the gravel  
It sputters back it is a rash upon the rock

My muscles flare underwater  
My horns fill with tears

I hope I hear you say I am still worth recovering

## a bin

Kendall Grady told me go out  
And buy yrself a big black dildo

I said Kendall remember when you asked me  
To tell you when you are being racist

You are being racist right now, Kendall  
You think because I am a 13-yr-old girl

And blonde and a Catholic  
I want a dildo that is big, hard and black

I do want a dildo that is hard  
But not abnormally hard

I just think a dildo that's not at least a little bit hard  
Is not going to solve the problem

I went out and bought a small white dildo  
It was almost too small

That is how I knew it was the correct purchase  
It cost me 2 dollars and 35 cents

And was in a bin marked *reduced for quick sale*  
I wish I could've paid more for my dildo

Paying so little made me feel a little trashy  
It made me feel I was not shopping for dildos at all

I said I am not buying a rabbit's foot keychain here  
I told Chewy all my problems

The clerk at the dildo store his name was Chewy  
I asked him did they have a fancier model for 50 dollars

In the size and color I was searching for  
He said for that kind of money I should buy a big black one

I said size and color is of course not everything  
He said he sold a smallish black one for 35 dollars



I said don't be ridiculous  
What am I fantasizing I'm having sex with here a unicorn?

I said Chewy what if you buy the small white dildo for 2 dollars and 35 cents  
And then sell it to me in the alleyway for 50 dollars

Then I don't have to feel so trashy  
Chewy said that would not be fair to the owner of this dildo store

Chewy said I should pay 53 dollars and 63 cents for the big black dildo  
And then he would throw in the small white one for free

Fuck it Chewy you don't get it I said  
I said I am trying not to make this shit get racial here

I have never seen a yellow dildo  
But I imagine it would come in a pretty box

That is delicately wrapped  
And the eye of its urethra would be very squinty

The tip of my tiny white dildo does not have a urethra  
Kendall said it's because white girls want to eat their cake

But don't want cake that threatens to impregnate them  
I said you are being a racist right now Kendall

I said the reason why my dildo was so cheap  
Was because it was not very detailed

How detailed can a dildo be before it's no longer dildo  
And starts becoming something else maybe a robot

If it walks on the beach  
If it writes a poem of our long walks together

When robots write poetry they will all be people

## about the author

Kiik A.K.'s first book of poems made no impact whatsoever. The critics were not pleased by it saying, we have no knowledge or record of her whatsoever. Kiik is usually a man. Unless no record of him exists in which case he is a woman. He was winner of the Youth Haemophiliacs Hospital raffle. Kiik lives here in this room. When you run out the lights he comes in through the window and eats out of your garbage. Since he's eaten garbage exclusively for years now it is quite accurate if you say, *Kiik is mostly garbage*. When the lights come on Kiik gets himself real small and crawls inside this tiny box. A pupa wraps its mitten of fur around the word. The mouth of flour rubs its ghost over the flute. The angel of steam raises his palm flush to the barrel.

## **all children are equally beautiful**

There is no such thing as a 5lb dog  
65lbs and fatter is something  
Anything punier is no dog  
Yr 8lb dog is really just a cat other dogs will still have sex with  
I know cat owners are getting angry with me  
But I don't fear a fight with an old, agoraphobic cat owner  
There's a correct weight for the creatures in this life  
You think my mom sent me to fat camp cause all children are equally beautiful  
You think fat camp charged my mom twenty grand  
Because there is not a correct weight for the creatures in this life  
There is a correct weight for creatures  
If all you knew about a person was they weighed 115lbs  
A 115lb woman just sounds HOTTTT  
That's the furthest the description has to go  
A hideous 115lb man that's Ben Kingsley in Gandhi  
How wet does that make you ladies  
I like that we're working together to solve confusions  
Anything 115lbs is woman anything 200lbs and higher is man  
I know yr going to say yr pregnant wife is 200lbs  
But that has already been cleared up  
Yr married to a fat guy, homo  
Good luck squeezing yr babies out of his penis  
Do you think a man giving birth is more miraculous than a virgin birth  
All I can say is he'd be considerably more bedridden afterward  
How much do you think Jesus weighed say after a breakup  
Isn't it strange that Jesus was real and weighed an actual number  
That his heart actually weighed something if you could pick it up  
Isn't it strange the things we value most weigh nothing  
Like the spirit or friendship or destiny  
I mean yr friend weighs something  
Especially when she is fat  
But the friendships contained in the body weigh nothing  
Isn't it the strangest thing to get stoned and write poetry  
Isn't it stranger still to read that poem aloud  
To a group of people some of whom might be strangers  
They think maybe you sound clever  
But really you are just high as a muthafucker  
Isn't it strange every time you see yr dog  
He's always wearing the same clothes

## the rice cooker

You have been throwing yr wife's clothes  
Onto the lawn for an hour  
Then you threw out the rice cooker  
A neighbor comes by and wants to make you an offer  
But the rice cooker is not on the lawn to make you yr money  
It is not for yr neighbor to cook his actual rice for his actually-hungry family  
It is for yr wife a pull into the driveway  
And be alerted holy mother of fuck  
This is no yard sale  
This is no gypsy's house  
This is my actual house  
Where this shame gallery is taking place  
You get worried a homeless person may come  
And take yr wife's stuff before she can get home  
And feel properly shamed  
Now yr paying a guy to stand vigil  
While yr inside getting together what else can  
Be hauled over and arranged  
Into the constellation of shame upon yr lawn  
But yr thinking what sort of a guy  
Lets you pay him to watch you do this  
The sort of guy you can trust or  
The sort that might steal yr rice cooker  
And yr money for a watch-job he's not even done  
So now you got two guys watching each other  
And the rest of the neighborhood  
Rare condition being each person has got equally to want that rice cooker  
Or else one might make off with it  
So two boys for whom rice won't make them no nevermind if it's cooked or not  
And so they don't make a plan to share that rice cooker  
One getting it monday thru wednesday  
The other thursday to saturday and every other sunday  
Two boys each with a written physical description of yr wife  
As when she arrives at her shame gallery they  
Make like a banana and clear the fuck out  
Since then it is a sacred moment between a husband and a wife  
The husband inside anesthetizing himself  
With all the special-occasion booze  
The wife outside sweating bullets  
Steeling herself for potential violences  
Though supposing yr wife arrives

With the sonofabitch she's been whoring it with  
It being the thing I am calling her vaginal and her anal  
And you need to enlist the aid of yr boys  
In overpowering these two degenerates  
One to sit upon yr wife's back sort of holding her against the lawn  
One to hold back the fists of that homewrecker  
While you pummel and cry upon the shirt of that homewrecker  
So you got two boys of sufficient build and health  
Each holding two physical descriptions  
Or three if you want them extra cautious of yr neighbor  
Who wanted to steal yr rice cooker originally  
Six leaflets total it's a process  
There's no denying it's a process  
It's a commitment getting married  
And knowing the dark days you'll fall upon

## **how to give a baby a facelift**

Cue Marco

Marco enters with a drill + a bucket

The room is completely white

There is a hammer, a sponge

Cue Jaime wearing a plastic outfit

Jaime has come prepared for the demolition

Joe is stripping off his street clothes

And getting into plastic and booties

Joe says he is willing to get muddy

Music fills the room like the dirty light from a lamp

Today is claw work

Cue Marco saying today is claw work

Jaime + Joe shake hands + introduce themselves

Jaime says my name is Jaime

Joe says to get ready with the electricity

Steam rises from the baby

Joe bats at the smoke

We see Marco, Jaime + Joe eating lunch together

Jaime spreads out a blueprint upon their table

Joe tosses the toothpick he was chewing onto the blueprint of the baby

Marco picks up a sledgehammer

Cue Marco saying the sledgehammer is probably too much

Joe and Jaime look at each other but don't stop Marco

Jaime tapes up the corners of the baby

Joe fills a bucket with paint

From home Marco has brought his own table saw

## about the author

Kiik A.K. is not what you'd call a successful man. Whatever is one word over from successful would be more accurately describing him. Kendall Grady said, You might call what he's doing *being a man*. But he has to try so hard. It sort of removes the possibility of any real success. For him to earn his penis, he must quit attempting to buy penis. The best penis in life is free. Or when you're really drunk. Kiik A.K. is author of twenty-three books of poetry. One book, twenty-three copies of it. I love it, his mother proclaimed, stepping on them to reach pickles on her high shelf. One day when Kiik is mummified, he would like to be entombed with a decoy mummy. Perhaps a pygmy horse. In his will all his gold and jewels will go to ornament his enemies. For their bodies to be frisked, ridiculed for smelliness. When Kiik is mummified he will submerge his linens in a solution two parts desflurane, two parts halothane, one part sevoflurane. He will wander through his coma of rags.



## the alarm

After a long time someone comes on  
& says, I'm sry for the long wait  
I ask, did you plan to hrt my feelings  
By making me wait such a long time & they say no  
I ask, who did want to hrt me  
& was it their boss  
They say no one wanted to hrt me,  
They were just very very busy  
Hrting others who ask for it, I ask  
She says she never tries to hrt anybody  
But is sry if I got accidentally hrt  
I ask if I was not hrt would she still  
Care about my feelings & she says yes  
I ask if I wasn't hrt would she still  
Feel sry for me & she says no because  
She doesn't believe in excessive pity  
I admit I am a little hrt  
Plus a little angry but not at her  
I am only angry at whoever she is protecting  
Then I ask her to describe her boss for me  
So as I can project my anger onto something physical  
She says her boss is not at fault here  
I say if she knows where to locate fault she intends  
To hrt me a little by protecting others  
She says the others at fault are only people like me  
I say, so you know them too  
& I tell her to give me their phone numbers  
So as I can give them a piece  
She says she does not want to be complicit in my hrtful act  
I say, yr already in above yr head  
But I'll try & keep yr name out of it  
She says people get hrt because there is  
Not one like her for every one like me  
I say, so you even have a solution & can't do shit about it  
She says I am continuing to hrt someone  
Just like me, just by continuing to be me in this moment  
I ask her to tell me that other person's number  
& I'll call them later to apologize  
She says she is only alerting me, people get hrt without intention  
I say, by alerting me you have given me intention  
& is she inferring I hrt myself

But she has already fallen off & as I am  
Calling to her, are you alright are you alright  
A voice replaces hers asking how can I help you

## **pulled down the stairs, dragged through the lawn**

I would like for you to try and kill me  
I would like for you to try and strangle me in the shower  
I would like if you had no hair when you strangled me  
It is not that I am upset by hair  
It is that I know you are not the type to give away your DNA casually  
I want you to take killing seriously  
I want you to be naked when you try and kill me  
Because you remember how liberal I am with DNA  
You will not like it to muck up your dress  
You will want to easily spray the DNA  
From your apparently prepubescent body  
You are a fan of convenience and the godliness  
Of a shaved woman beneath running water  
I would like for you to fail  
I do not want to die just as I am getting the exact thing  
I've always wanted  
I would like to pass out and for you to think I expired  
I would like you to lean in real close near my face with a feather  
But for the vane to be too dampened to detect breathing  
I would like for you to slap me a little  
And pinch the tip of my cock between your fingernails  
I would like you to decide you will drag me  
Into the woods in my shower curtain  
I would like to be wrapped up like a leftover in my curtain  
And pulled down the stairs, through the kitchen  
I would like for you to be sweating  
And complaining about how heavy I am  
I would like you to get embarrassed when you are caught  
By police when dragging me through the lawn  
I would like you to say it isn't what it looks like  
And we are just playing a game  
I would like to see you several times in court over the coming years  
I would like for you to be wearing an unflattering prison jumpsuit  
And for your mane to be growing in thickly  
I would like for you to be forced to talk about me  
About how you wrapped me in a curtain and tested my cock  
I want you to say you are sorry  
Even though you are assuredly less than sorry  
I want you to dream of me  
When trying to achieve a blackness of your mind  
My bright body at the ends of your arms

## a wolf

Here you are with yr stone  
You rub it down  
Rubbing it down you think  
How pleasant it feels  
To hold this thing  
That attempts utter simplicity  
Thing so complete  
Relative to its attempt  
Though later while rubbing  
Yr stone on the couch  
You feel somehow  
Less pleased than before  
You begin to suspect  
Yr stone of being  
Less complete than when  
You rubbed it earlier  
You realize yr stone  
Couldn't have begun  
At the point you first retrieved it  
You try not to be  
Too depressed  
About yr stone's lack of originality  
By originality not meaning  
The stone's particularity  
This smudge that groove  
But by the stone's distance  
From its origin  
Yr stone is too smooth  
Too free of complication  
You realize what you felt pleasure by  
Before was not completion  
But actually the stone's lack  
Of barbs  
And other complexities  
You hypothesize the only way to achieve  
The same pleasure as before  
Wd be to return the stone  
To its original state  
Yr sure you heard stones  
Only acquire a smoothness  
After they've lost their *horns*

It takes some doing  
But after some time  
You locate what seems  
An appropriate horn  
Now yr stone is wearing a horn  
You know this is not  
Its *original* horn  
But the originality of the horn  
Seems less important  
Than the pleasure that depends  
On a performed completeness  
The horn is rather big  
With a horn of this largeness  
You wonder where the stone was all along  
Who is to say the horn should not be  
The object of affection  
And the stone I'd been rubbing  
Just some fucking pimple  
By now you must be feeling  
The sort of anger I was feeling  
You may be wondering  
What stone and horn symbolize  
Or I know I am wondering that  
Surely they can't be  
The inconsequential objects they signify  
Only an utter moron wd devise a poem  
Of this length without a map for his cymbals  
So is stone a metaphor  
For state of dissatisfaction  
Is stone a wolf is it  
A baby  
Or maybe it is  
My genitals  
I do not like to position the word wolf  
Too close to my genitals  
It is why I shield my genitals with a baby  
I get afraid the wolf might bite at them  
Even though I know he can't  
Escape out of the cage  
Unless I unlatch it  
By *in the cage* I mean the wolf  
And not my genitals  
My genitals are not in a cage  
That wd be ridiculous

## **a trumpet**

The only reason you might find this funny  
Is you were expecting poetry  
And not this other thing  
About when this lamb farted  
Usually when you are walking beside a lamb  
That's farting you pretend not to hear it  
We call that being polite  
To the friend trying to teach you about lambs  
You do not want to say astonished  
I think your lamb is doing farts right now  
Most people have heard lambs farting  
But not many write poems because of it  
Most people forget  
But I won't forget you, little lamb  
Little lamb of painful, crampy gas  
And a wee mist of diarrhea  
Every time I spell diarrhea I have to look it up  
I always think there should be two h's  
I am being careful!  
Choosing just the right words  
The fart was really loud!  
Somehow you expected it would get muffled  
Under all that wool  
But there is that lamb butthole  
Raised like a little gray trumpet  
Without so much wool around it  
To say hush little lamb fart  
A lot of people think they can get up here  
And do what I do  
And they're right  
But who asks for this embarrassment  
No one gives you cash money for that  
Someone might give you money for the lamb  
To cook and carry out the lamb  
To sew the lamb into a purse or mask  
But no one will pay for what is brief  
And animal as exhalation  
Though it smelled of yarrow, white sage  
And a wafer of volcanic ash  
And when you strangled it  
It sounded something like music

## the organ

A poet ate her own hand!  
That is worse than the average cannibalism  
A cannibal that swallows his teeth  
Has to gum all the person he can  
We have charred the limbs they twisted as they cooked  
We strung the fat the fire reached up to guzzle it  
Now we dance around a pouch of caramel  
The eyes are crème brulee for the children to spoon at  
Why her own hand?  
Is that not her reproductive organ and  
How will she get scratched?  
Every day a poet should dip her hand in poison  
Every day another coat of barbs  
To chew your ambition only provokes appetite  
As when you lop a finger off and  
The neighboring fingers grow superpowers  
Pull a white hair and the  
Alzheimer's becomes more fierce  
You can try and be rid of your nature  
You can knit a sweater around the torso of a chimp  
And teach him in origami how a diaper  
Is also an envelope  
But one day he will strangle you  
As you walk in front of his bananas  
You think reifications won't strangle  
You think they won't clog the tunnels  
Of your neighborhood  
They are suffocating your neighbor this moment  
At her birthday party and laughing  
The poet can cast all her flour to the grease  
But that is only to eat your fire in a mouth of gasoline

## the boot

I like for when you are napping and  
I am driving to strike small animals  
And roll their tiny bones and voices  
And all manners of hair and cushion  
Beneath our treaded wheels  
I like as the car lunges for a squirrel  
I know will not escape to say,  
*There will be bread for my ants tonight*  
Squirrel perhaps –  
I see it turning over and cannot remember  
From what manner of animal it came  
I think it is a cowboy boot crammed  
Of meat and violets,  
Gravel, spume  
I get angry  
I say, *who is the cowboy thought to do that?*  
*Packt his boot with meat*  
*And leave it for me to strike down?*  
And then, *what is God to conceive of the squirrel*  
*And the cowboy*  
*And you asleep beside me?*  
What is God to conceive of my need to trample  
The weaker animals of this road?  
Should their majesty, their strength,  
Precision count for nothing?  
Or has the squirrel, the cowboy's boot arrived  
To remind me of my own strength  
And ultimate authority?  
Sometimes I dream of this while you are driving  
I think if I knew you were avoiding animals  
While I slept beside you –  
I would be overcome by anger  
That is why I love to be a driver in this life  
It is a little like getting to murder  
All the forensic scientists in one town  
I loved to be Abraham in the school play  
And hold Isaac's head underwater  
How I loved to feel Isaac's hair in my fist!  
I don't expect anyone will hold  
Me accountable for that



## compass

You are the rarest sort of person  
It feels right to hear myself lie  
It feels right to punish myself  
Life is finding the right person to punish yourself by  
I prefer to die a little better each night  
You are the best at one thing  
And that is ritual abuse  
That is burning your place into my heart  
I know one day the poison will run thin in your jar  
And I will be forced to confront my strength and autonomy  
Which could stun everyone  
But I fear only my love for you when the poison is gone  
And my skin goes wandering in every direction  
There is no compass for the skin  
There is only endless geography

## the third heaven

A woman made me see there  
Could be no such thing as heaven  
She did this by being alarmingly beautiful  
So beautiful in retaliation of the beauty I'd used  
To constitute that word  
I realized the severity of my hideousness  
I saw the inferiority of my heart  
Which could not find an appropriate response  
There were some plants nearby  
I hid behind some plants and felt really sad  
How inconsequential this heart  
I knew my heaven would be a station  
Where everybody looked like her  
And her heaven would be a terminal  
That'd have nothing to do with me  
How goddamned immiscible those heavens  
How bitter my faith in the singularity of heaven  
Bitter faith yes this was some fucked-up shit alright  
How difficult was this decision for Jesus at his window  
To build my selfish heavens  
Or hers that'd revoke my afterlife  
A thought occurred what if there was  
Somehow an even more beautiful woman  
That could render this woman hideous  
And render me I'm unsure but  
I'd probably just combust into peel and dandruff  
And maybe she was called Jesus  
And I and the suddenly-hideous woman  
Came to her heaven  
This third heaven  
Where we were tolerated by the grace  
Of her profound forgiveness  
This Jesus sounded to me like the best offer  
I could see myself learning to worship that  
The only forgiveness equal to her  
Was the here and now of this universe  
No not this universe  
Perhaps this room that supported both my existence  
And the existence of the beautiful woman equally  
No not equally  
She was still terribly beautiful and I imagine

Very happy about that and I was getting sadder and older  
All the time behind these plants  
These rooms attempt forgiveness  
Finding similar gratifications  
Manipulating a too-beautiful woman  
As a very hideous man  
This room she is like Jesus  
But with lower self-esteem and ambition  
The inexistence of my heaven instead  
Dug the shadow of this room  
A box that is slightly better than this universe  
You have angels that are made of words  
Whatever beauty is made of the voice

## **gems**

I am not much of a performer

Sometimes I perform but I sweat a lot and need to bring along some napkins

The woman from McDonald's said you steal too many napkins our food is not spicy

This year I performed only once in the dream of Sandra Doller

There were a few people there

Tupac Shakur was there with Angela

My eccentric aunt Dottie

But it's difficult to say what those people will remember

Since the venue was a bakery in Sandra Doller's mind

At least one person was there to witness the performance in the flesh

And that was the magnificent Sandra Doller

And then Sandra told me about the dream

In that moment I saw the thing a little bit too

This performance that happened in the bakery

I said something of the bakery before and now it appears here a second time

In the bakery the intention was for me to read some poems

Already this dream sounds so far-fetched

I could not admit this to Sandra but I do not actually know what reading is

I write on and off but to this day I am mostly illiterate

When I am forced to read I have to take a lot of naps

I take enough naps it feels like to nap again would make me nauseous

And then sometimes I can read a thing  
At this "reading" there was a podium and a microphone  
I'm not so very tall so I'm assuming they were lowered considerably  
I am only about 1 ft tall  
But if I'm standing I am somewhat taller  
We were moving the podium and the microphone  
We couldn't decide if the audience should sit on the floor or on divans or pillows  
I said now this part of the dream sounds a lot like me  
I am reading and being sweaty and uncomfortable  
Rightly the audience should also be a little tortured in their butts or leg cramps  
The moving of the setting and the microphone became the reading  
Then someone put on some hip-hop music  
And it seemed like the reading began/ended  
I only performed once this year in the dream of Sandra Doller  
But it was a solid performance  
There was much critical acclaim and high-fiving in the hullabaloo of the evening  
Tupac clasped a necklace around my neck  
And said never use the word hullabaloo again  
My Aunt Dottie had a difficult time rising from her position on the ground  
Let her have a difficulty I said  
Let her knead her cramp for an hour  
This is my one and only reading of the year

This all is happening in my favorite bakery

I am wearing gems and feeling really shiny

## **a chair**

My only anxiety was why did they own that small chair outside  
Who did they make sit in the chair  
And how long did they remain seated  
I would not say I was frightened of the chair  
It was more I felt ashamed  
How I could not stop thinking of the chair  
When I was supposed to be making love or paying  
For groceries or holding my friend's new baby  
And I'd have to drop whatever it was  
And rush back to the tiny chair  
To see if there was something sitting in it  
I said to the poet Ben Doller please come  
Get your chair out of my head  
Ben Doller said once you have seen the chair  
You cannot really expect your life to find definition  
Beyond relation to the chair  
I said but this is the first I've heard you speak of it  
Ben Doller said if you're a truly good poet you'll forget it  
But probably you will keep talking about it  
I said tell me who you get to sit in the chair  
The magnificent Sandra Doller said do not make fun of our chair  
Sandra Doller said a very special woman sits in that chair  
Later in a tree holding binoculars I did see a woman  
Perhaps sixteen inches tall sitting upon the chair  
I said my god I understand it all now  
A lot of wild stuff happened after that  
A lot of stuff I can explain it all to you now

## **i had a good time**

The thing I don't enjoy in this life  
Is a 5-minute youtube video  
Of two straight women  
Who are kissing each other  
There are more lies I have I can tell  
I am so lonely  
I want to ask you to stay  
Stay for all of my stories  
But all I do to keep you is lies  
I am lucky for this space  
This half-phantom I refer to  
*As my speaker*  
There is no speaker  
I am speaking  
But even though I say to you  
I ran a cop over in my car  
You are thinking o that is just  
His character he is trying on  
I ran over a cop  
And I fought a raccoon  
Not all in the same day  
Totally separate occurrences  
But I don't escape that those two events  
Define me better than everything  
The raccoon was trying to steal a ham  
I had wrapped in a Pearl Jam t-shirt  
Why I keep a ham wrapped in a t-shirt  
In the backseat of my car  
That's another time  
The raccoon was really large  
I don't want it to sound as though  
This was a clean fight  
Blood from both sides was running  
Those two hours by the car  
I do not need to brag about  
What I did with his body  
Suffice it to say I am no raccoon  
Telling the story about how he killed  
And tossed this person  
Over his neighbor's fence  
I ran over the cop while I was texting



I was texting Bill to tell him  
I'd had a good time  
And that is no lie, Bill  
I had a good time  
They say this cop was only  
A week from retirement  
It never happens another way  
Seventeen years after retirement  
A man is nothing he was before  
After seventeen years of retirement  
Not even a real man  
Some men are defined by their work  
Some feel for a lie to hold  
The others in place  
But I haven't any use for lies  
I am lucky that you know  
That I know I shouldn't  
Reveal my truth  
So I can tell it like it happened  
And you might defend me  
And say I am good  
Some men have good intentions  
But I am only looking for a good time  
You hold onto your intentions  
I will hold onto your desire to rescue me

## **i don't think you get to keep it**

I've never known a love  
That traded me delight  
For any less than ten times  
The days of trouble and defeat  
Or a love I thought was pure  
That didn't make me starve myself  
And beat myself to keep it  
I don't think you get to keep it  
You only get to borrow  
The best things especially a miracle  
I don't know if love ever  
Can be truly *achieved*  
Some things you see  
Them only a minute  
Then they demand  
Your continual pursuit  
I don't see this really  
As about your happiness  
I say you don't get to know this thing  
So you can live in a space of newness  
And happiness all your years  
I say this really  
Is about loss and impossibility  
I think this lifetime cannot help  
But extend beyond the people  
And the geographies we care for  
When you have confronted  
The impossibility of living without them  
When you have loved someone so feverishly  
Every molecule of you was dying  
And you touched the only part  
Of another person that was infinite  
And it was their dying  
You remember you never  
Can truly lose anything  
There is a ghost quantity that remains  
There is this twin existence that moves over  
I think it's worth saying  
Most of us have known ten times the suffering  
As we have delight  
But there is ten times this life

Beyond suffering or delight  
There is love that doesn't compromise  
Itself to our groping for its definition  
Isn't that really worth  
All our trouble and defeat  
Isn't that really the better miracle

## the jacket

The moment I am looking at your hand  
And your hand is transfigured by leaving  
I am thinking probably you will die  
Or I will die  
That's always the most likely thing  
That will happen  
In this world  
We get a life full of possibility  
Possibility is another way to say  
Nothing has happened  
But death probably will happen very soon  
It always was what was  
Assured to happen  
And today probably you will die  
As your dying becomes just so inevitable  
When you're on route  
To a different occasion  
A wedding is another way of saying  
They will surely die tomorrow  
Only in a memory can you find  
Death was not possible  
Only in a memory do your keys  
Move back toward your jacket pocket  
And your jacket moves back toward me

## **new pictures**

New tenants are moving into the house  
Fine I was only borrowing that house

New pictures are being nailed upon the walls  
Fine those are God's walls  
Those are borrowed nails

New lovers are tumbling under the sheets  
Fine we were lovers once  
We borrowed love  
Those won't be the last lovers under those sheets

New children are swaddled by our clothes  
Fine my ghost was merely passing through those clothes

New songs will find their way to my throat  
No one owns these songs  
Nobody keeps this throat

## **everything depends on this**

You will only have one chance to fool the donkey  
To do this  
You must become *very donkey*

You must act the role of the donkey  
Better than the donkey  
Will be able to perform itself

You must not receive the slightest pleasure  
In playing the donkey to perfection  
The most remote hint of pleasure

And the donkey will be alerted  
You will only have one chance to fool the donkey  
Every evening you must sacrifice more of yourself

You cannot expect to keep yourself  
As you spend all your days  
Becoming donkey

It is only as the donkey slips  
Out of his suit  
An hour maybe two

To deodorize  
To whack debris loose  
And ventilate its pink meat

A chance exists  
To reach a stinkier more essential *donkey*  
Even the donkey will not understand

How to embody  
You cannot do it just any old way  
You cannot pretend there might exist an audience

Who receives pleasure  
From you getting into a character  
You must do all this with real genuine feeling

To practice donkey you must insist

You must *believe past insistence*  
You are not actually practicing anything

You must eat with the mouth of the donkey  
You must be aroused  
By the constellation of the donkey's arousal

You must dress in the style of the donkey  
But as you fumigate less each month each year  
Style must transfigure into skin

Everything depends on this  
When you confront the donkey  
The donkey will bear no grounds to deny

You indeed are supremely donkey  
You will only have one chance  
To convince the donkey you are teacher

And the donkey is somehow student  
You must forget the intent  
Of becoming the donkey's teacher

The intent was always the amnesia itself  
The black amnesias of heaven

You must take care of the donkey  
Better than the donkey could love itself

You must mourn the donkey  
You will not be able to fool yourself here

Everything depends on this