

SALVAGE
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Black
Lawrence
Press

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radio ocularia

{flutter}

When I tell this story, it's full of telephone books and tortoiseshell combs. Full of night sweats and sweet figs rotting on the table. June, and I am still getting used to the way space curves around me differently. How the net that holds my heart in place has just the tiniest finger tear. Almost invisible to the human eye. Almost insignificant, except for the moths that keep escaping one by one to bang against the window screen all night. Still, my happiness is a frightening and precarious happiness, like a girl tightrope between two skyscrapers. Her held breath and heated pulse. When I tell this story, I still carve my name in that tree in the park, but the letters are rearranged and unreadable. I am still pretty, wearing flowered sundresses and foamy lingerie but pretty in an esoteric and conceptual way, like tea towels and tiny porcelain cats. All night, I make a sound in my lungs like something terrible scratching its way up from the basement. My edges are messy and ruined and inhospitable. When I tell this story, I open my chest and the center slips two hand widths to the left.

{obscura}

Before long, I agree to be the ghost in this play, but only if I can sleep late and break shit. You give me three lines and a hurled candy dish before I go off script. Off topic. Mistake the oracle for an opening for a regular occurrence. All I remember of the countryside is hard, hard water that made my hair brittle and my showerhead chalky. I keep dreaming that my eyeteeth crumble into my palm and I can't see enough to taste you. Your countryside was all car trips and cicada storms and the deer that crashed through the passenger window and yet somehow survived. Somehow, I agree to be the ghost again, but this time I break my wrist in the first act and keep stepping on your cues. My nightgown keeps tangling in the footlights and catching on fire.

{cage}

Despite all the blood, my acreage is well maintained and ordered. Odd even. Odd even. Boy girl. Boy girl. The eggs line up inside me and wait their turn, even while the bones in my chest swell and bend to the changes in the barometer. Admittedly, I loved the avian dissection more than I should. The tiny bones. The sweet breaking sounds. Loved the death note, the thrill song. The tiny beating contradiction of it all. I can see the gaps in your narrative like a tear in the curtain. The bars on my windows and doors shimmer. I tell you quietly that I killed the monster beating deep in the heart of the goldfinch. How it feels good to lock the door behind me. How it feels good to unlock it with my teeth each morning.

{radio ocularia}

Soon, my ears fill up with liquid, water in all my orifices. Holes in all my words, loaded thick and leaking all over the linoleum. I drew a circle with a sharpie and stood inside it. I drew a circle and waited, hearing everything and nothing, not quite sure what to do with my hands besides touch myself. Misheard *love* for *valve* for *vibration*. I drew a circle and each hold in the body was thick with saltwater and close to sinking, filled with broken chandeliers and women's dark coats. All my limbs wavery and exotic. Oceanic, and prone to tiny ships sailing in and out of my mouth at the slightest sign of weather.

{codex}

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between an *apple* and an *antelope*. I make a list. Things that seem possible. Things that seem impossible. A mountain and a machine. Each built letter by letter, syllable by syllable. An enormous furred animal that smells like sweetgrass sits between us on the counter and I cannot speak. Small gears click uselessly beneath my tongue. I write *glottal* but I mean *goldfish*. What I carry in my pocket, my polite exterior. They say children learn French best before age 5 when the mulch of their brain is still forming. All those tiny synapses netting across a backdrop of stars. This could be a beautiful thing, the perfect word always burning itself like a ghost beneath the intended. *Cul de sac* becoming *caricature* becoming *carcinogen*. *Butterfly* becoming *butter knife* becoming *flying buttress*. My synapses flicker and go dark. There is an *abacus* tree over near the window being eaten by the antelope.

{breath}

This language makes me anxious. *Buoy. Boy.* Nothing of the moon but this silver edge that coats my throat. Whitecaps froth the distance, but the greys keep seeping into blacks. A ship stuffed with oysters, all rotting and no pearls. When the water comes, I am still mostly sea and only partly salt, listing toward the horizon. I broke open the shell and found not voice, but violas, steering my tiny boat awkwardly over the rocky shore. I breathe, and the intake makes me anxious. I sing and the exhale erodes the beach. So we float, we all float, we all flow toward it.

{interior}

See here this circle I have created within the circle. The tiny blood dot within the white snow. Within the eye of the needle, within the eye within the *I*. My disease is a beautiful disease. Even my limbs grow smudged and soft at the slightest touch. My *I* within the eye makes a whistling sound that is a lot like the chamber inside the nautilus, a thickening near the anterior wall that swallows me down and down. Once inside, my disease swallows raspberries and flashlights and small, quick-hearted animals. Once inside my strangeness grows stranger still.

{codex 2}

At first, nothing was happening. But then everything that was happening was something bad. I could do impossible things with my voice. Build structures out of oak and brick and tiny plastic spoons. The house was filled with too many gears and dangling wires, the rivets that creaked while I tried to sleep. I was waiting for the words to line up all school like and sing. But there was still no air conditioning and sticky pleather couches in all the waiting rooms of every doctor I've ever seen. Still no solace in their green-tinged light. Nothing was happening, but everything was happening so fast. I was waiting for the children to line up one by one in the hallway and take their medications. I was waiting for the riot when they did not.

{rigging}

Until we've killed every single bird that has nested in my body, I sleep in the guest room. Sleep with the stars above my head glowing like tiny reactors so far removed that they flicker and occasionally go dark. The wings that shift in my belly are the same wings that tangle in my hair, but I am careful to let them go willingly if they'll come back. Careful not to wreck their tiny bones with my fingers. Careful not to cough or snuffle when the lights go out one by one. When they've sung all night inside the box of me.