

Sandra Kolankiewicz

## **If We Could Speak**

By the time we met again, I was not  
so bold as to think I mattered, had found  
the patience needed to cultivate what  
rarely grows, adapted to my quarter  
after quite a struggle that led me out  
of what I see was nowhere. You were there,  
across the place, too far enough away to  
wave, just be seen instead of counted.  
I know by now we have inhabited  
distant spheres for what could be called decades  
if time existed, our languages with  
no decoding stone, having no common  
roots in carbon, asteroids, and the hearts  
of stars, your silicone-based words too fast  
for me, my modes of speech vulnerable  
to electric outages and programs  
that go wrong suddenly in the middle  
and take on the life of the stranger who  
designed them. If we could speak, we would call  
our lives opened fruit, our insides still damp  
but drying quickly, left out on a plate  
somewhere uncovered while our gazes join,  
the blackness in our pupils fills with light.

## Understanding Arthur

What kind of husband did he make? The name  
of his book stirs a woman cold, never mind  
the language it's translated into or her  
level of ignorance. He must not have

told her, most importantly her father,  
conforming to tradition after all,  
not in some specialized quirk but in the  
everyday on which all people agree,

what Uncle Charles would have called 'tightly packed  
maggots,' of youth now the lines in counting  
books, out there on the edge of the desert,  
haggling and trading when once he just lived,

like us unable to leave an out post  
on the frayed edge of wilderness  
even for the weekly festivals, the  
excesses of youth lining the roads of

the journey, a gauntlet of regret. If  
we walk to the station for a one way  
ticket, the sins from yesterday and last  
week become the bowers we pass under

and the treacherous alleyways we must  
progress beyond amid whispers at the  
grocery stand, tales traded over the  
fence, no place here to roam invisibly.

## **We Couldn't Even**

We couldn't even hold a camera straight after that lunch on the *avenida*, when we just laughed and shrugged, spent all our money. I didn't know you had a stolen bathing suit from the shop next door, slipped into your somewhere, you there at everything I did wrong, a few things right, but at the edge as usual. If I didn't want you, why would I have invited you? How long does it take to get well when you wake up sick, you asked, already knowing the answer.

## **Kryptopyrrulia**

I would come out slugging, but perhaps they do something good which no expert can tell. In some of us, under emotional and physical illness, red blood cells pump them out like first responders to gorge on our zinc and vitamin B, suck the strength from our methylation, allow toxins to build till we're no longer ourselves but a collection of behaviors swinging in and out, so inconsistent we no longer know who we are. We cease storing the toys under the eave and begin to ignore them on the lawn till they're plastered with grass clippings and mud splatters, nooks and crannies breeding mosquitoes. The old piano we dismantled lies in the front hall for three weeks before we call a man to haul it away: we step over it every day on our way to work. The children circle it from the living room to the kitchen and back. Can we trace our disorder to our small percentage of Neanderthal that no one will discuss? Just the pure will survive. Whoever they are.

## Communique #2

A resolution would demand resolve in the face of dissipation, a word which implies a slow, measured permanent decline in which one might be aware yet still acquiesce in the dissolution. Why shouldn't it be that way, if our spelling is automatically corrected? When all we have to do is approximate the target instead of taking the time to aim, the same habit to which we've grown accustomed in love, stuck on the replacement parts of what we don't recognize is an engine that can run without us. Imagine yourself a Stirling salesman, trying to convince a client that his trash can be turned into electricity. Who would mind the smoke when everything else is missing?