

Mariah Hamang

nonfiction

The crosswalk is blocks away, I could dash through the void before the halt of the blinking, but this is the city—the citizen. I am not a living spirit in a body of carnal pulp, this is no playground of vegetation and energy coursing within us, leaves, you, feet, seeds of all kinds. Here there are jaundiced splotches of skin-tinting lotions, ambulances, old men with back braces, I cannot just let the humming mumble of your melody diffuse throughout my body precipitating fingertips and eye muscles and all other fleshy edges, the husk, the husky invisible organs pulsing as one pulse, as many pulses. This is quantum theory, this is inside you, scraping against all the right and left buttons, performing knowledge, transformation inside you, pearls, you are filling each other up with pearls. Does shoveling destroy or create? Where was your orgasm? Two or more spaces hurled at you, landing more or less underneath the wheezy television, rather unsettled. Your suggestion is to turn around and bewilder the mosquitoes and now we are running, your laugh is that deep, smirking satisfaction from your throat or your nose or your sternum as I hurdle horizontal tree trunks and you, the Adam to my mitochondrial Eve, primal substance despite the disillusioned nature trail before the distinctions between fen and bog. Something is to be said about pedestrian crossings.

Simple

I am the schoolteacher who seduced her thirteen-year-old student. He pursued me like a man, and our marriage is happy.

I put roofies in the cornbread, and steroids in the meth, for good measure, we tied double knots around our fates (rent) and sprinkled balloons all over this town.

I am that man on a prayer mat, bowing toward Mecca between classes, savoring the indications of habits that haunt these hallways, a junkie's a junkie.

I am the daughter of an impulse in my father to concede to an impulse in my mother, a renewal of the bittersweet aching of the generations to breed more mouths and hands and eyes to stand in more assembly lines that package our snow globes.

I will die kneeling in a nursery home, praying to some promised utopia, puttering down to a payoff that was always this escape.

I think if more pilgrims had smoked peace pipes and found their spirit animals, I would feel more american.

I will tell you you can't talk to me like that as I avert your eyes and steal the zip-loc bags, telling you you should see what middle school is all about.

I pick up the bread crumbs scattered in a straight path, cup them in my hands, and feed them to the birds, to the resemblance.

preserve

your fingers were steady,
you skin tone gave nothing away
as you said “by then I will be almost 40”
 knowing it would be past forty.
through the windows of the breakfast dive
we started counting the compromises
in somersaults, in unlikely quarters
 of these counties.
the confines of a territory.
did you feel you lost the chance
 when you said no?
even the sugar substitutes
have substitutes, the bended gaze.
mimicry, tokens of insecurities.
dismayed that all the revelations were laid before you
in a Blimpie at 3 AM, in a gas station
conversation, in your seventh cup
of coffee, or vodka, depending on the age.
and now it makes no sense
to say you want mothers, to be with a person
 who has designed a life
 groping for impossibility.
we have to get out of here,
we have to climb these mountains of neuroses,
 afraid to sleep because
we might miss an opportunity,
we might really have to slacken the defenses,
tighten the hemispheres. they are always
 so discontent, so unbelievably noisy.

timeline

together, our bookshelves could bristle.
I have imagined it like i imagine
myself as someone else like myself,
but older. Someone done
with the things I am doing.
It is probably a woman because
I am a woman and I think
womanly things. Someone has to.
I am not sure what this plastic wrap is doing
around here. These borderlines are becoming
more fun to poke at, more difficult
to see. I am confused. you laugh
when I use words like “obfuscating.” I swear
this feels like a phase of life.

I recall something once said
about a duck quacking and looking oddly
like a duck. ah, well. discouragement.
Not in your eyes, but rather in the corners
of this room—
not in its conversations,
in its red veil,
but out there. All that stuff
out there. And for now,
it is right here. But I am telling you,
getting sleep will be delightful.

flame

You can shave off the scenery. You find which luck you want to press, and you don't press it. Not yet. There are too many outlets. We must speak more kindly to the machines. We question the resistance of scar tissue to skin cancer, how the winter will affect our sun worship. Devouring your surroundings, you conclude they are stale, like any hometown. The meandering desire to leave did not account for the disappearance of unscaled mountaintops; it stopped or started at the palm trees, depending on your direction. straps and pigeonholes. indeterminable altitudes. relentless riverbeds. And all the while, the hazard areas were charted neatly in the pamphlets you never use, the mileage made indefatigable assumptions we didn't bother to disprove, just disregard.

tuft

We crowd around the infrastructure.

Our wrists break as we wait

for something to do with our palms.

There are clouds between us now, and water towers,
and their shadows.

snap, fizz, snap, fizz.

We have no neighbors, nor roads that lead to Rome.

Here my dreams are louder—

they wake me up at 3 am,

picking out the Proto-Indo-European as if

I were to get anything more vibrant out of it.

Our discourse is far more beautiful in Sanskrit,
although we understand next to nothing.

Still. We do not define work with physics.

We leave scraps of it on tables, trading utensils.

Are we to take restlessness seriously?

Have we nothing else to do but wither

and wring out the frustration?

It is quiet when it hits the others.

Even though we can't bear the impatience,

time will pass. with or without dignity.

In airports, in forgeries,

in passive aggression,

I cannot wait around anywhere forever.

grown up

oh, it is the hallway.
the tunnel of potential
in little capsules,
flesh and steel spirits,
 floating in what is not said
 under
currants are delicious.

 the eye lock,
or not. there is always
 diversion. talk about the weather.
 fine print. this floor
is difficult.

 a song says “what
will you give,” and i think.
it is better not to answer
when it was not a question.

you send your isolation
like a vibe. the airs between
our words reach at each other

invisibly. this chair is broken.
these are details. new ones,
more familiar every weekend.
almost nothing, then nothing.
we had almost progressed
to miscommunication.

heads heavy and lines
sufficiently blurred,
we remain artificial.