

Radio

SILENCE

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Black
Lawrence
Press

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* “Radio Silence” is continued in intervals, with each new section marked at the top by this symbol: *⚡ ⚡*

Road Mapped

There is the giving and the taking and the taking back. There is the day and the day is a woman who loves you. There's a boy with a thumb no bigger than the moon. There are rabid dogs in packs of three, a moment to call it poverty, a dead dust bowl idea of wealth, a dead child in a posthole, delicious intent turned sour, a country going west. There are buffalo who stagger boulder-like in the dark. The periphery and the periphery of that. A coyote who has not eaten, a small steady biting at her center. There is the bell in a town no one rings, a statue's weeping, and there is the weeping of those who visit her, arms extended, supplicant as grass. There is the marching of soldiers into villages and the shrieking of ballistics in the night. The dullness of blood and a trunk of dolls lodged in the branches of a tree. There is the robe his mother wore, pink with one yellow flower, ribboning like the flag of a ruined country. There is the sighing of holy men who do not pray for the end of suffering but for the end of our willingness to accept it. The ungrate that offers its neck to the river. Candle flames ghosting around in the ungentle air. That painting of the boy rowing out to anchored galleon. There is his happiness in going and his dread and both are small spiders that live in the catacombs of his nights. There are the people who could not resist the sweetness of falling, the bridge with Plexiglas

and the bridges without. There is a woman
staring in the distance at a carnival, a mother
with dull insidious fruits clumped in a sack
near her heart. There are the sad notes of the mandolin,
the old hurts we remember wrong, all trembling, all curling
like smoke. Made from flaring ghosts. Whistled thin.

Radio Silence



For instance, the sky is revolting.
Magpies weave parabolas between trees,
black rainbows tailing through the open
cut of clouds. Pillow fat. The future
falling warm with thunder around its neck.
Here we speak sideways. Geese and rain.
Children holding nothing but the burnt ends
of their kites. Old Folgers, rusted through,
cupped string conversations. Winds inside
these winds spiral cigarette butts around
the yard. Fool's gold. In the forgetting
dark, we take off our names. We become
something like lightning, cracked bone.

✎ ✎

Instead of burying the shoebox,
we take off our shirts and kiss
the ground. Again, the moths fly
out, the gross wonder. We're still young.
Shaped by summer and its lesions.
We toe the line between field
and sun until it's light
in our mouths.

✎ ✎

I've picked up carving linnets in the attic
of an abandoned house to hold onto
something flightless. To be uncrushing.
Outside, the wind curls talons
from the ice near what used to be
a kitchen window. If you close your eyes
you can smell the river from here.



This is the town of old weather
where orange trees rise
from the pockets of the dead,
where we burn
hornet nests and keep
watermelons in the well,
where ghosts have a way
of making themselves
found. Call it a miracle
or sleight of hand. Say
there is nothing to say
about the dead. Tonight
they are the silver lake,
our reason to bend
at the waist, to make
the same gestures
our mothers made, saying
we are sorry, we loved
the water too much
to stop drowning here.

✎ ✎

I remember us buying peppermints
from the gas station outside Florence.
Your tongue a radioactive stripe
until we drove to the ocean
where there was nothing left.

✎ ✎

Imagine this is still the late nineties.
The man scratched in rags on the bench
behind the church drinking the ship
right out of the bottle. On his back
he finally hears the angels' light
breathing. They say nothing, which is:
I've been waiting for you my whole life.

⚡ ⚡

A peacock fans.
Other peacocks
fan.

Girls go running
across a picture
of a globe.

We understand
what fiction is.

We have rooms
for rooms.

That is not the sky.
That is the sky.

Vivisecting

The first out is the heart, small
gourd pulled from a wet pocket
of the body promised heaven
whose soul would come back
in a swell of insects or dry season
rain, who would become
for a night the moon's dull glow.

Then the doctor, half-clothed,
holds up the dark glob shining
to bring on the ten thousand
stars like the blinking eyes of gods.

This is the madness we dance for
hoping like fire to learn
the world the way a sloth learns
a tree's particular curve,
to come apart piece by
bloodied piece knowing nothing
goes back, to call home
the difficult weather, the severed
soul, the ball-to-glove thud
of figs in summer falling
each morning to mulch.

Evening News

A man shoots through
another man, his chest

a black sky of star holes.
On the trail a white male

plucks a girl's clothes off
like apples, articles and socks

found in the creek nearby.
The amber alert crawling

through our backyards.
We hold the bedspread

to our necks and pray
for less evidence, for

safe and endless water.
Fires plume the Bitterroot

en masse orange, twelve
hells combing the hillside.

A gas station clerk
found with his neck

boiled red in the register.
All for a night of light

heads. The football team
record resting on the arm

of a boy who is addicted
to the way he feels

after midnight.
Some move

to be alone,
to be common

and replaceable
by mountainsides.

I hold onto myself
like a grenade.

✎ ✎

When some men open their palms you can see
abandoned railroads in the ghost town
of their veins. Their memories tail like a semi
in a thunderstorm. Hats stiff as baseboards.
They tell us stories of winds undressing towns
and bats blank as the bones of infants.
When they laugh their hunger grows.
Their silence could put a shotgun through the roof,
their grief sweet as smoke in the hard music rising.



We close our eyes to arrive in the middle of a field.
A field with holes rifled through aluminum cans and dogs
whose eyes have been mistaken for cans. We grow up
all over again: the road's gravel in our skin, drunk sunset
drilling crimson holes down the sky's open throat.
In the distance a coal train crawls across these hills
like a glinting necklace. Grass makes sauce
of last fall's pumpkins and a horse falls to its knees.
This is the way we weather. First lightning, then lightning.

✎ ✎

There is art in the way a body falls
but the way it lies is artless.

Art in a drowning people
who tumble like laundry

in the chop of a storm
only the future saw

coming. But forests still drop
their galaxies of seeds to take hold

in fire, some necessary burn
like saying goodbye to a lover

who never loved you. Like Moses
putting flame to peasant towns.



In some dreams we dream
we are no longer immaculate.
Cats long their backs against a window
so thick with glass a constellation
could particle into dust. We grow love
tall like cornstalks and wait for moths
to gorge. Home just a room of candles
with no god to wish them out. We are tired
of being tired. We walk through the forest,
blindfolded, pretending our heads a row
of matches, waiting and desperate to be struck.



If you listened closely you probably heard the stories
in our eyes: we'd seen the black bottoms of rivers.