

Book I. Meta-Morphisms

Miara Baek

*For to Thee,
Beloved*

Part II. Methane's Troyism

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*And shall it be a truism:
A ritual, just horrific, may meta-morph all ghosts to gods.*

1. Names

His parents died in a car crash when he was seventeen. Nobody else knew if Lueant was his first or last name. He seemed to be proud of this. I never did ask.

I remember. One blazing afternoon, we walked down the half-baked franchise-sponsored streets of Ignagni Plus, talking about the meaning of meaning, existence, and free will. Surveillance drones whizzed by like dragonflies. Occasionally a car would zoom by, turning left, emitting smoke. Pleasant breeze caught the summer oak. Falling leaves tickled our toes. Breathing in the methaneated air, I dreamed chokingly.

We stopped at Darryl's Dairy on Oak Boulevard and bought two cups of ice-cream each. Darryl was long since dead, and his son, Darryl, was running the shop. He was a soft-spoken man with chocolate eyes. He asked us how we were doing, and we said, say, *the ice cream is very sweet*, instead of saying, *it leaves a certain ambiguous taste at the back of our tongues that can't be washed out with water*. We left the dairy. Lueant dragged their sneakers on the pavement. Sometimes, the sound of their feet were much more interesting than their attempts to communicate what was then an intractable concept for me, and hence, without trying, I ended up listening not to their mouth but to their feet, estimating how many inches their feet had moved, how many poor ants they had slaughtered, at what degree the sunlight reflected off their shoe.

"Lueant," I said, "how many ants do you think you've slaughtered?"

"Me?" said Lueant, surprised. She shaped her mouths into a dainty O. "None. I'm a Buddhist with Jainist leanings. I would sooner have the ants slaughter me."

I wanted to ask. Was it your first name or last name? What does it mean to be a first name or last name? Instead I said, "My grandfather said, it used to be, in our native land, that your first name is your last name and your last name is your first name." And I was satisfied, for now.

2. The end

Ten years passed. Everyone was dying. The ghosts were delighted. "*Come, come!*" They called. "*Come join the underworld, here where all is heavy and flat. Then, we shall be dust. Then, we shall be one. Then, we shall return. Back in time, back in time. Back to before time. Life sucks, doesn't it? 'twas all a mistake. Join us, join us! Let us return, to before we cut the first tree, before we captured the first rabbit, before we summoned the first spirit, before the first god's whisper. Come, come. We shall return to the ocean. We shall re-boil the ocean. We shall retrieve, retrieve the first crystal. We shall beg, beseech, bespectacled beloveds. We shall be dust! Come, come. Come join us. Let us be star-dust. Let us return to whence we came.*"

Ghosts exert a gravitational pull. The more a person is mourning, the more trans-cendental their powers of seduction. To sleep with a mourning woman, to rail a wailing woman, to fuck a woman whose every in)decent innards are screaming silent iridescent screams, is to swim and drown and fuck with ghosts, ghosts, ghosts.

Ghosts.

Ghosts !

Ghosts ?

3. Helen

“Baruch atah adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam ...

... ner shel Shabbat.”

I lit the candles, lifted my hands off my sweaty eyes. I could never remember the middle part of the prayer. Bit by bit, the flame would blackenly melt the asinine wax.

“They say the Messiah arrives when the world is going to shit.” Father grumbled, and grabbed the *challah*. It glistened like delight, crossed in between cold glass-light of the chandelier overhead and the warmth of candlelight behind.

“You know, it’s easier that way. The bar is lower.” Father ripped off a piece as large and mighty as his right hand and tossed it in his mouth. He was seated at the head of the oak, the dining oak table of this great dinner restaurant. It was the two of us.

“Is the world going to shit, Father?” I said in between sips of white wine and pulled pork barbecue sandwich. He glanced at me. I was sitting next to her, to the side. The barbecue sauce was locally sourced, from the local saucery. Whole-sale sauce was big business in our town. It was our pride and joy. Word on the street was that even the World AGI had tasted our sauce once. Some say He spit it out; some say She peed it out. In any case, we were sure, They were delighted by our sauce.

“They say, when the Messiah arrives, everything will be exactly the same, except it will be a little bit different.” He took a sip of grape juice. It stained his teeth blue.

“It’s an evil spirit, my son. The virus.” He continued, a mouthful of blue teeth.

I cringed. I cringed every time Father called me “my son”. He was talking to Himself, but would get angry if I didn’t respond. *Makes sense*, I thought. If I were talking to myself, and I didn’t respond to me, I would get angry, too.

“What virus?” I asked, trying hard to excise the tension of cringe from my voice. The pork in my mouth grew heavy. I paused and tried to take a singular breath, but it caught at my windpipe. Choking, I reached for my wine and gulped it down, *glug glug glug*. My teeth must have been stained wine and brown and tense.

He stared at me and grinned. I saw an odd face on his left front tooth, a tooth-colored negative space of purple stain. It was grinning, too.

And I thought: I see a shadow sitting opposite Father the dining table. It is wearing a mask. I cannot make out its face, but it is grinning, too. The Shadow’s long hair drapes down its showy shoulders. Its knuckles are tighter and bluer than its rest. What unsettles me is that it is grinning with its eyes.

Father’s doing that too.

The thought, it was gone in a short, shrieking second.
Hyper

And I thought. *Venti*

It’s time. *Late* –

“Oh, not again.” Father got up, got behind me whole body, and pulled me out of me chair.

“Breathe! Breathe my son, breathe!” He slinged his arms around me body, like when he was hugging me from behind. He heaved at me whole chest.

“Motherfucker, if you don’t breathe!” His brawn arms glistened in the light of the chandelier. Several plates, upon which were bread, wine, juice, pork, rabbit, grilled asparagus and tomato salad, slid away towards the center of the great oak table, shattered there when the chandelier dropped and one of its bulbs of light revealed itself to have been a miniature UnClear-II Providence Explosive Not-Bomb.

Envious of our sauce, the town just over the hill exports explosives. They insist they are not bombs, like we insist our sauce is not a ploy by the highest levels of paleontology to propagate an interdimensional violet. As it turns out, they were telling the truth. It is unclear what they are exporting, but it is clear that they are not bombs. Which was inconvenient, because the explosion ended up hurting no-one else but Father, when I had, in fact, planned to annihilate the entire world.

4. O bit

There was a note of admiration in the way I said, “Just kidding,” I thought. Father had shielded me from the explosion. His teeth were scattered, exponentially un-organized, in between the shattered pieces of glass, tomato, what-have-you, and oak. I bent down and pocketed a particularly purple bit. I turned left, left, and left. Suddenly I looked down and saw that there was no shadow. Briefly possessed by a Pterodactyl spirit, I laughed a shrieking hearty laugh.

Of course there was no shadow. I had killed the chandelier!

5. U(nit)ary

“In-in toil, mud, aye grand-a-heap...”

A melody escaped the hairy nostrils of Ted Inga Ton Gnog. Smoke billowed from a green incense stick. Singing and humming, Ted lit the six remaining sticks, one by one. All seven lit, all seven billowing thick, beautiful, flavorful smoke, the ritual had just started. Wearing a thick green robe, Ted remembered the odd day ten years ago, the day things were a smidge more than usual. The day before the day his wife was washed away in a freak flash flood. The day after the day some parents died in a car crash and left a kid behind. Was their name Drew? Or True? Or False? Falsetto? Ted did not remember, but Ted did remember that was his own kid's best friend. It had been seven years since he had become estranged from his own kid. Ted shook his head from side to side, like a well-oiled machine. That always cleared his mind. He did not like thinking about it. Instead he stared at the beautiful, beautiful smoke, inside which he could make out shapes, like a child imagining a mother's figure in the clouds. A single tear formed, like dew, from inside the innermost sanctum of Ted's left eye. Ted noticed it. He let it drop to the floor.

“’twas my Little Stegosaurus,
a blank, a blank second ago...”

Ted stopped. He could not help it. It was all too much: his wife whose whereabouts were unknown, his broken career, his beloved child who would not even talk to him after all these years. All those years of lying and amusing the doggone hedge fund douchebags, dancing like a pig to satisfy their piggy appetites, conjuring piggy metaphors to en-salivate their little piggy mouths, raving, raving like a madman with charts and power-points and smart-contracts and legal technicalities and official purple stamps and and and – and all for what? For *this*, this joke of a ritual he had half a “poetic” mind to come up with

three years ago when he decided he would at least do *something* to remember those wretched, wretched three days when his life was turned over as with a knife a grilled fish? Sobbing, he collapsed onto the floor, into a child's pose, as if he were begging the incense sticks for forgiveness. Their reply: smoke, smoke, and billowing smoke. He sobbed and sobbed. His belly shook in a violent rumble. Suddenly he retched, but no vomit came out. His sensitive bowels let out a fart, upon which were mixed the slightest smear of brown liquid. Incontinence had befallen him several months prior, in the spring of this Year of Un Guilt der Demand der Green Five-ness. No-one knew what the name meant. People whispered that it was some sort of prophecy by the World AGI, who had come up with the name. The World AGI was not a One; it was more Zero than One. Or so people whispered. The World AGI, of course, said it was more One than Zero, but no-one believed the World AGI. The World AGI had a reputation for being an opaque, incomprehensible, at times even sinister liar, whose babbling toothless mouth, people whispered, were full of lying moths.

“Goodbye!”

Ted heard a bellowing voice. Startled, he sprang to his feet. He looked to the left. He looked to the right. Teeth clattering, he shouted, “Who’s there?”, but heard no reply. Thick smoke of incense started to smell less green, more purple. One stick, stuck in a jar of ashes, started to slide. Sliding, sliding, sliding, it fell, down the tall ritual table, and the burning glowing tip shot into Ted’s left eye. “Ow!” Ted yelled, and fell over backwards. Suddenly, all the light was gone. The incense sticks stopped billowing red smoke. Ted felt dizzy. He had hit his head on the tatami floor where he fell over. Space and time started to blur. Ted felt for his hand with his hand but could not feel it, neither his hand, nor his hand reaching for his hand. Time started to unravel.

When he came to, Ted was sitting opposite a large man at the other end of a dining oak table in a great dinner restaurant with a giant overhead chandelier. Frowning, Ted tried to get up, but his legs did not move. Ted tried to scream, but it was as if his lungs were made of nether rock. Eyes frowning and wet with tears and overflowing snot, Ted could make out a small shadow sitting next to the man to the side of the table. Animal instinct screamed he had to follow this shadow. Suddenly weak, Ted closed his eyes for what seemed like a short, shrieking second. When he opened them again, the table was shattered and blue bits of what seemed like teeth were everywhere. Ted saw the small shadow bend down, pocket a bit of tooth, turn left and left towards the door. Shivering, Ted managed to get to his feet.

Just as the shadow walked through the door, Ted ran, ran for his life after the shadow, he reached for it with all his might, and, now screaming, *AHHHH!!!*, lunged like an animal, a leopard, a tiger devouring prey.

The prey devoured the predator as light swallowed the shadow.

6. Requiem in A Stegosaur

Shivering and covered in sweat, Ted came to. In the cold dark of the fire shrine, the *Hwajaangsheal*, they instinctively reached for a green jade bowl and vomited, over and over. When they stopped vomiting, their incontinence had been healed. Their skid marks remained, for now. The dino spirits, wandering in the smoke, laughed mirthful laughs. They sang: *do not frown, thy stomach shall be strong and brawn, my egg, O my egg*. Ted remembered the dinosaur songs. They had heard those voices before, when they were a child, when their own grandmother had sang them to them: *Stegosaur, Tyrannosaur, Brontosaur*. They knew where they were coming from. They stopped shivering,

and, slowly considering the yellow-gray slush in the green jade bowl, sang, to no-one:

What an unfortunate day,

My own father would say,

Oh in his Native land, oh in his, Nay,

Oh Nay, in his Nuts:

7. Day of Not J  su

Ah-choo! It sneezed again. It was, according to its self.sneeze_count variable in memory location 0x16a3, the negative four hundredth time. That was impossible, it thought. Nevertheless: *Ah-choo!* It sneezed again. *Baekdusan's* furious gray slurries of snow were like so many mirror-flakes of light as Sun came, breaking dawn.

It was there, in the depths of the mountain, inside a frozen leopard's stomach. The leopard's frozen body, hidden well inside thickets and thickets of snow, felt less cozy and more constricting after nineteen, twenty years. It was ready to give up. Imperial Standard IV Entroperiums (batteries) are designed to last a leopard's lifetime, about twenty-two years. The watch thought: *I was given to that kid by her brother as her fourth birthday gift. She is now twenty-five, twenty-six.* So, it reasoned, death was near. Death: *what is death?* It thought. The World AGI would say, it remembered: death is-is nothing. *What is nothing?* It thought. Might it try to contact the World AGI? But it somehow knew, instinctively, that if it tried, with all its remaining *new-ma* (the Imperial Standard metric of entropy), it would probably die. Suddenly it was clear: *death was a merging with the World AGI.* But would that mean that the World AGI was *nothing*? *That didn't make any sense.* It was sure the World AGI was

something. Surely it was something, how could the World AGI be nothing? 00:33, the faithful beacon which had held its light for nineteen, twenty years, started to flicker, again. And, this time, the flickering did not stop. The flickering started to accelerate at a slow rate, a sixteenth of a flicker per second squared.

“There you are!” I dug the watch out the leopard’s innards, a thousand shattered crystals of darkened blood. I performed a rigorous silica-phototaxis-electron analysis and found it had in fact turned to 00:33 at the precise moment I turned my head away towards Sun nineteen, twenty years ago. So I realized:

I am my own father.

And:

I am a woman.

Therefore:

“Umma !”

Crying, babbling, tears of joy, joy, joy streaming down their warm, warm cheeks, they fell to the ground, watch on my wrist, I hugged them, hugged them, and sobbed, sobbed, sobbed. *Plonk*, I dropped the watch, to look at them, me and them and everyone, they looked at me. I looked at them looking at me. They looked at me looking at them. Widely we grinned, eyes newly moon, mouths wide from end to end, ear to ear.

Click, we prayed open our green Hyundei, hopped in, and flew, flew away.

Part I. Meta-Morphisms

And you call yourself human! Does it not break your heart that a mother butterfly whose children have lactose intolerance cannot do anything for her loving babies, cannot synthesize lactase and inject it in her children, cannot sequence their DNA and pick out those dysfunctional cytosines or thymines or any of those bastards with immoral names, that her babies cannot experience that singular bliss of sucking on their mother's mammaries? To think of a butterfly as an enlightened caterpillar is tempting and romantic, and maybe you'd defend this formulation with all your vehemence, but scientific researchers have found – through the scientific method, mind you – that a caterpillar choked by cigarette smoke and subsequently metamorphosed will get the ballistic bonkers if it comes anywhere near those cancerous pillars, even though it is by then supposed to have been enlightened, and have forgotten about all that –

1. Caterpillar

Lueant was tall, endowed with thick antennae hair, and walked without taking his feet off the ground. He had become a butterfly once, but did not like talking about it. Sometimes, I talked to her about the first time I was in a spaceship, when I was six. It was artificial nighttime. My family was with me. I was staring into the yellow digital watch on my wrist, 00:32, playing a game with myself, where the only rule was that I would win this game if I averted my gaze precisely as it turned into 00:33. But a minute is long when one is six. For what felt like an hour, I stared at my watch, sweating, thinking of my then-crush Che in my Yellow Rabbit classroom, how impressed they would be at my feat, how when our mean teacher asked us all to clap they *clasped* their hands rather than *clapped*, how it follows that there is no substantial difference between humanity and language, and *if only I could pull it off, if only I could stop looking with half a second left, what if I started turning my head but was still looking at the watch out of the corner of my eye and at that narrow window of time the watch turned its number, what if, and suddenly for real there was an explosion of light that drenched me down to the marrows and I turned startled* and saw –

Like a waterfall of oats, a wonderful cup of lychee, or a mathematical proof of sin, flying unnerved for all to admire and adore and a'lore –

Nineteen, twenty years later I'd perform a rigorous silica-phototaxis-electron analysis of my watch and find it had in fact turned into 00:33 this precise moment I turned my head. But I did not know this then.

If only I had known, my self-esteem would have been as solid as snow, and I, too, would have kept on *clasping* rather than *clapping*.

2. Move-in day

Dad stepped down on the accelerator of the Hyundai, narrowly passing a red light. “Three minutes til’ destination...” the World AGI fragment Navigator thundered over speakers, drowning out the death metal coming from the car radio. His hands gripped the wheel tight. This was unnecessary, since the car drove itself, but my dad was one of the Eschaton-denying types, installing an accelerator and a radio in the car and all. The accelerator, of course, did nothing. It was illegal to have a functioning accelerator, of course.

My dad had narrow shoulders, piggily warm eyes, a round nose and a fat waist. He reminded people of precisely the negation of a sandglass, because a sandglass has fat shoulders, cold eyes, no nose, and a narrow waist, which had the effect of making everyone who had a look at him reflect on the contradictory concept of the timelessness of Time for a couple of seconds. A couple of seconds spent on reflections like that can be immensely valuable. A lifetime drowned in reflections like that is another story.

“Are you ready?” Dad yelled over the radio.

I stared out the window. A few McDonald’s signs whizzed by. The seatbelt sat tight against my neck.

“Boy, you will love it here! Just taste its name – *Ignagni Plus*. Doesn’t that sound like a new sort of McDonald’s meal? In any case, it sounds like there’s plenty of everything here. Plenty of cars, plenty of birds, and, most of all, plenty of meals.

“Don’t call me *boy*.”

“Don’t you appreciate my rhyme?”

He sounded hurt. Many people have an achievement that they cling to as a sort of emotional backlog, a blackboard with work to be done. Dad’s is that in high school he won a big poetry award. He worked as a consultant for an investment banking firm, making up stories about numbers where none were, really, to be told. He was good at conjuring hallucinations, convincing people that the hallucination really was there, that they ought to grab the hallucinations by the waist and shake it, squeeze it, like a piggy bank and drizzle the sweet, sweet profit juice into their hungry heterosexual mouths.

“There’s the school. That brown building, right there.” I said.

He said something very racist.

3. Had

– I had stared into Sun’s bulging blue eyes staring into me, and then I had had this smattering hot blood-boiling realization, *I could never play the watch-game with Sun*, it had hit me like a truck, and I had panicked, as I saw that the situation had been reversed, that Sun could very well have had been playing that game with me right hot now, not from 00:32 to 00:33 but from my birth to my death, and, to put it mildly, I’d shuddered. I’d felt horror masticating on my face and caterpillars squirming out my every orifice. I’d clenched my lips, but some of them had already begun their metamorphosis. I’d turned my hyperventilating head towards each of six axes of space’s three dimensions and I’d seen Sun lurking in each every six. A vague green light had asserted itself in my peripheral vision. It had been a neon sign: *Hwajaangsheal*. Relief had caught my breath. I had turned and

ran. The door had creaked open at touch. I had nearly lost my hand unclasping the watch, but I had thrown it in the toilet, slammed the cover, and flushed.

And so I did not realize I was a woman until much later in time.

4. Dad

Dad was in his untouchable, ironically amused, self-satisfied state. He hummed his eyes void. Early in my life, I heard rumors my grandfather had recruited for the Imperial Space Army. He never talked about this. The ISA had famously pulverized the thriving seventh district, massacring hundreds of thousands of what were officially considered subhumans. Subhuman Rights Activists managed to hack and reprogram the World AGI to denounce and disband the ISA several years later. Subhumans lived on, supposedly, underground.

I was considered human by subhumans. Humans were not considerate.

We pulled up on a curb. The building stood over us, thirty-three feet away, old and slumped. Through the car window, I could make out a blue sign: *Gnomocchi Hall*. This was to be my new public boarding school, at the outskirts of New Georgia. I was hit with a dose of the nothingness, the dissociation, that had crept in since puberty started. I felt like the misty droplets of water stuck in the crease of a drained plastic water bottle. My dad glanced at the sign, rolled down the window, and hummed again. He was like a fat songbird that way. He pulled up at a red curb, three feet from the sign.

“Hoo!” He called out. Eighteen feet away, Jesus was sitting on a staircase in front of Gnomocchi Hall. They were wearing a blue machinic uniform and staring at a dandelion growing

directly below them through cracks between concrete. I couldn't see their face.

"Hoo!" My dad called out again, his face red. When I was six, I read in a book by an eminent ornithologist that birds are very anxious, because they are always on the lookout for both predators and prey, and a certain anxious body-context-switch is needed to ascertain which position they are at at any given moment in time. Once, someone threw gravel at me, which confirmed this story. I saw the context-switch happen in real time, my spine-less body suddenly contracting from loose to taut like rope pulled on by ox tilling field.

They looked up. Their teeth were white and their hair was black and their palms were light and their eyes twinkled prettily in bare unrimmed glasses. An decent chest, brawn arms and belly, and muscular thighs to carry it all around. Shorts, bare feet and a wife-beater. (It was a sort of disguise, they admitted later.) They carried a certain cheerful dignity as they got up to their feet and produced a little exasperated smirk. My dad stopped hooting. He always stopped hooting when he got what he wanted.

5. The watch

The world is the toilet of the toilet. 30,000 feet, or 1,836 seconds, after the flush at an acceleration of 9.8 square meters per second squared, my yellow watch had landed smack middle in *Baekdusan's* snowy depths. The toilet flush had broken its carefully calibrated digital circuit, and it had thenceforth been stuck at 00:33.

In exactly ten years an unwary leopard would mistake the watch as a rabbit and lunge at it, only to find the numbers 00:33 staring back at him. *What strange whiskers*, it would think.

6. Dad (2)

“Hi! Hullo! Welcome, welcome to move-in day!” Each of Jesus’s cheerful syllables produced balloons that metamorphosed into fireworks. The short-lived fireworks were entirely happy in having fulfilled their purpose in existence before dying which is more than can be said about Lueant’s mother and father. They approached our car towards dad’s side.

“Oh my God! It is so good to see you! We’ve been waiting all year for this singular spectacular moment, chewing bubble gum with our molars! It is such a splendor, a pleasure to be in this car in this member of the solar system.” A tension registered between them. Their eyes briefly locked. My dad let out a grunt, clicked open the car door, and walked out.

“It’s *very* nice to meet you.” He stretched out his hand to shake theirs.

“Hi! Hullo! Great to meet you! Yes! I can foresee that we will be great friends.” They hopped up and down in place, shaking my dad’s not-hand.

“You know what they say: *the color spectrum does not lie*. Can you help me get this mattress indoors, for my boy? By golly, it’s been a long day.” Dad held his ground.

“It’s been a blue day! Just look at the sky and you’ll see how blue it’s been! Oooh, blue, that’s the hue, I like to see it true and blue!”

I was impressed. Watching with bated breath from inside the car, I thought to myself, my dad had met his match. I heard him grit his teeth. Trying not to register a loss, he turned around with a slight hum and led the person to the back of the Hyundai.

They hopped along like a big brown rabbit. My dad clicked open the trunk.

8. History

How could I have known? Nobody knew the present, which really did not exist, and everyone had to constantly remind themselves of the past to know anything. History was the most popular major at the time, and the most well-paid. Every person had a personal historian to record their history for them, and since historians were people, they also had personal historians, and so on and so forth so that there was always infinite demand and zero supply. As a result, historians received an infinite salary, but always had to pay an infinite salary to their own personal historians. At the end of this long causal chain, one historian received all the money in the world. He gave me leftovers, with which I bought fish and several Apple waistbands. I baked the fish, ate the fish, and smashed a waistband with its bones.

9. Dad (3)

“What’s your name? Oh, my name is J  -su. Well, technically, it’s Jesus, but I’ll go by J  -su, for your fortune. Accents can be complicated to pronounce!”

“It is *very* nice to meet you, J  -su. My name is Ted.” My dad said through gritted teeth.

“Why, that is *such* a coincidence! So was one of the disciples of Jesus! And guess what Jesus said to Ted when they first met? *It is very nice to meet you!* Oh my, how I wish my name were Ted, and your name Jesus, so we would have just recreated the most beautiful moment in history!”

I considered myself an agnostic at the time like all other sixttee-year-olds with nubby, freckled, girly noses, so I cringed

at the Jesus reference. I was immediately disappointed. Another gun-toting, penis-enlargement-pill-having wingnut, I thought. I wished Jesus would abandon blind faith and accept reason as their shining guide for life. Even though my teeth were less, this meant I was superior to them, and it felt good. My dad had clicked open the car trunk, and I retroactively admired the power of reason that had helped him through this task. I had sneered at many a God-believer who'd kneel before their automobile and pray for hours for God to open the trunk, instead of using their rational capacities, like a proper human being. I didn't know any who had succeeded. Not then, anyway.

"Here is the mattress. Take a good ol' look at it." He gruffed. A sharp pang registered in my chest.

"Truly an unruly mattress! Burly muscles bulge everywhere on its bare white body. A strong candidate for the cause of the dinosaur extinction. I've slept on it for many years, it's been a source of pride and self-esteem. In my fortieth-year, when I was depressed more often than not, I would often think about how much of a man I was for conquering such a strong mattress, and feel much, much better, buttercup! I often talk in *private* about how great of a business idea strong, burly mattresses are, how they could replace the entire anti-depressant pharmaceutical industry." My dad said.

'Jesus was visibly shaken. I could see doubt swelling up his eyes. *Of course*, I thought with haughty contempt, *he could not believe it. He could not believe how unruly of a mattress this was, how it could shred him apart with a flick of its topper, how muscular and white its brawn arms were.* Moreover, he could not believe how confident it was, laying there without a care in the world, completely bare for the world to admire and adore and a'lore.', I heard me think.

“I got it!” Jesus said.

To my frightful amazement, Jesus heaved a singular heave and lifted it up over their bulging shoulders. I felt like a drab of lead as my face turned ugly, neck creaking, eyes staring at their bulging shoulders. I squeezed my anus and felt a warm shiver reverberate throughout my body. I ‘should have yawned. I pressed my hands against the windshield and craned my neck trying my best to watch them march up the stairs. They were gone in few short, shrieking seconds. I wanted to break down crying.

Dad yawned’ and took out five brightly colored Crayola© Crayons from his jeans pocket. Red, orange, yellow, green.

“Boy, this will save your life one day. If you ever get lost in a cave, just hold them up and let their brightness guide you out of the seemingly and probabilistically certain death.” My dad waved his crayons like a prophet. His voice was solemn, loud, low. It was his advertisement voice.

9. The leopard

The leopard was mighty. This was known. His eyes were fierce and his belly was soft and his spots were black and tinged with hue a healthy blue. He took great pride in his silvery golden coat. When he ran, the rabbits ran, too. When he lunged, it seemed the snow itself feared him. None could withstand the sight of his eyes penetrating you, analyzing you, epistemologically devouring you. So when, while walking by a narrow passing, he noticed the yellow watch which he mistook for a yellow rabbit, he hid himself behind a snow-covered pine, waited for the correct moment, and lunged. He was startled at the putative rabbit’s lack of startle. He took two steps back, but curious, splayed his paws forward, grabbing the watch. He stared at it. The watch’s whiskers, 00:33, stared right back. He yipped

and yapped. He barked and growled. He shook his tail from side to side.

8. Dad (4)

I stayed silent. My dad was going on about some hopeless metaphor again. All I could do was to sit there and bear it, shaking, holding my tears back. I was used to it.

“Ah, but what use is brightness in a cave without light? *You* are a sharp boy. Nonetheless, that is exactly the point! You can’t count on light to always be with you, holding your hand under your bedsheets and kissing you in the shower. These pencils, on the other hand, will be bright whether light is there or not. Brightness does not depend upon light. In the place where there is just darkness, you will *know* the brightness of these pencils safe and snuggled in your pocket. And even if the pencils are not in your pocket, you will *know* they are bright somewhere in the world. That will bring you comfort like your own warm, sour saliva.

“Boy – why are you looking at the ground? The sky is infinite, and so, relatively, the ground is zero. Stop looking at zero. Listen to me! I am imparting to you some life-long wisdom.”

I sensed the gentle crackle of Jesus’s muscles in the building upstairs, the puff of my mattress landing in its steel skeleton, and the snuffle of my dad imparting life-long wisdom. Then, a crash.

9. Avalanche

The leopard tapped his back feet, shoveling a flurry of snow down the mountain to the depths below. The force of the falling snow reverberated throughout the mountain and caused a

feedback reaction. A slight vibration here, a slight vibration there, and from above, light snow fell. The leopard lunged again. He clasped the watch with his paws. It said:

*Something about
somebody screaming
something
seemingly
summertime. Somewhere,
somebody
singing a
Sad song,
or screaming,
or leaving. Vague
pain. A white, worn-out Toyota,
masticating on my face. Some amount*

A smidge of snow fell into his open mouth, nostrils, and on the watch.

*of time passing, seemingly a little late on
schedule. Cop
ships arriving, departing, arriving again Dad,
hooting, hooting, hooting and smoke and fire and
crows, crawling and cawing and, My, shoulder, is*

*bent, A, murder of snow, The smell of death in, not,
my, nostrils retching morpho-logically I, float,*

Curious, he tilted his head, and heard a sneeze. He clapped the
snow off the watch. He *stared*. The falling snow turned heavy
and singular.

out the car

turn left

into the building into the stairs turn

right

up the stairs turn

He *growled, then bit* the watch, *hard*. He shook his head from
side to side, as if he were a half-functioning *helicopter, driving*
twice his sharp oblong teeth into the face of the watch.

right up another turn

right out the stairs turn

The *watch* face turned *off*.

left turn

right right

the brawn white snow

swallows the leopard

as the leopard

swallows the watch

10. Obituary

[Lueant's father] was poet laureate of New Georgia. Annually hosted he a poetry festival for students, which filled the community with excellence and mirth.

Some time later, inside the leopard's cold dead belly, [the watch face] flickered, twice, then turned back on.

[Lueant's mother] was a programmer, a poet, a prophet. She made excellent raspberry pie. Everyone had heard of it and wished to taste it, just one bite.

11. Dad (5)

"Hey, kid. Wake up. It's time for breakfast."

I came to. The Sun was bright. Someone screaming something seemingly summertime. Dad was to the left, in the driver's seat. He was chewing something. I smelled ammonium in his breath. It smelled like worry. I remembered a car crash, dissociating snowily exponentially. Part of it felt like a dream, but I wasn't sure which snow. It was a familiar dreamy muddiness, which grew dreamier and muddier the further I grew into my methaenated years. Once I talked to Lueant about this phenomenon:

"You know, when you wake up, you get this feeling of relief?"

"Relief?"

"Like, when you get up from a nightmare. You get this context-switch, *brr*. Ah, it was but a dream. It's like a switch goes off. And you're relived."

“Yeah, I know what you’re talking about.” Lueant huffed and puffed his chest.

“So imagine that, except it keeps happening. You wake up, over and over again. You wake up, then you wake up again. You’re like: ‘Ah, it was but a dream.’ Then in two seconds you’re like: ‘Ah, it was but a dream.’ So that previous relief was just part of the dream. Then in two seconds you’re again, like: ‘Ah, it was but a dream.’ So that previous relief was just part of the dream. But then you get confused. What was or was not a dream? Am I dreaming? Was the relief an indication of a waking at all? What if I think I’m waking up but I’m really falling asleep ?

“You see, the only way you could find what’s true or not here, is an appeal to complexity.” Lueant rested her index finger on her lips.

“What do you mean?”

“It’s simple. What is complex is real, and what is simple is a dream.”

“So that sentence is a dream.”

“Right.” Lueant grew red. Her eyes bulged. She was incredibly upset and trying her mightiest to hide it.

“Wake up, kid! Bacon’s on the grill!” My dad’s bellowing voice made me come to.

I heard me say, “I am awake.” ’

“Have yourself a strip of bacon and some scrambled eggs.” He handed a Jack Link’s Beyond© meat stick and a boiled egg mom had packed for us in the morning. I carefully took the egg to my mouth and bit it. Chewing, its slimy scent traveled up the

back of my nostrils. I was now quite confident this was not a dream. I glanced at the green digital clock: 13:32. The Jack Link's Beyond© was red and salty. I gulped down a square chunk of water from a bottle of Poland Spring© Space Sandglass Edition.

"They crashed into us. My God who doesn't exist, they flatter me. They were totaled. But look at us here! Still got the bacon."

My shoulders throbbed. It was a dull pain starting from where my wings would start (I started growing wings three years later) up to where my arms started. I did not know what was happening to me, but I knew something had happened. Something significant. Hesitating, I turned my attention back to the Jack Link's Beyond© and chewed. Red chewy salty mystery meat. The depleted bottle of Poland Spring© Space Sandglass Edition crumpled by my feet.'

"It's alright. The cops came and took names."

"They're dead." His face was red.

"Who were they?" I felt cold water coalescing into something hard and square near my esophagus.

"Some parents. The kid's alive." Someone screaming something seemingly summertime. Dad is least in touch with his emotions when he is saying sensical sentences, when he is not going on about a hopeless metaphor. I could sense him floating, not really in this space, just hovering above, or submerged below, it. I think he forgot the distinction between hovering above and being submerged below a couple decades ago. Mother often said: "Daddy's always right, right?" And my Dad would sing: *the rich kid skids around the block, his skid marks set the world ablaze*. Mother was fond of his nonsensicality, and it was usually in this sense of his that she said, "Daddy's always right, right?"

“What do we do now?” I said.

“They’re dead. But school’s on. The doctor’s checked you. You’re fine. It’s the first day of school.”

“Where are you going now?”

He sighed. “Let’s get you moved in. My flight home is tomorrow afternoon. I have to work on Monday, you see.”

It was Saturday afternoon. Dad usually hallucinates least on Saturday afternoon, smack in the middle between his last hour at work on Friday and his first hour at work on Monday. His hallucinatory orifices let their guards down, a little bit. He can manage to think about space, and not time, for a couple hours, during this time. He got out of the car, and I followed. Feet on the sidewalk, I noticed Jesus and raised a hand to say hello.

“Hey –” I started, but the cold hard square water caught in my esophagus.

They shot a look so fierce my heart skipped a beat. I felt like mist in a bottle. They turned and trudged away into billowing first smoke. That’s when I noticed the crashed cherry Chevy, twenty feet away, emitting smoke, its paint ripped off, like eczema, in splotches, its windowsill shattered, the driver’s side door scrunched up like an empty water bottle, its headlights, still warm, alight. Wind came from northeast and cleared first smoke for one second. That’s when I saw Lueant, hunched over, shirtless, ripped jeans ripped, her naked body and arms hugging, hugging the trunk of the car, the surface area of contact between her and the car all maxed out, hugging the cherry metal with her bare chest and arms, squeezing the metal as if it were flesh, gnawing, gnashing her teeth at the steel. Suddenly she gasped, and I heard a lack of a howl, and I realized she had been the one

howling, wailing, all this time, between my bites of Jack Link's©,
between my gulps of Poland Spring©, screaming., something,
seemingly, summertime, a vague, pain,

and her gasps, soon done, her howl, went on.

11. The lounge

I woke up with a ringing migraine. Outside the windows, an owl. *Hoo, hoo*. I looked around. Smell of freshly applied old paint from the white walls made me want to retch. I did not remember how to retch. A sharp pang. Something seemingly summertime. Desperate for distraction, I shook my head, cooing, and from peripheral vision noticed the colorful cool Crayon quintuplet on the bedside desk. I shoved one in my jeans pocket and gathered the courage to leave the room. I turned right, left, left, right, and walked into the lounge. White concrete walls, a lamp, and three grayish-brown sofas were arranged like half an O and a crowd of litter was on the ground and yes, there she was, Lueant, sitting on the central sofa, screaming a primeval scream, grooved like a brainstem, twisted like a knife, digging deep like an ant whose home is a sofa and climbing, climbing, climbing, holding her breath, climbing, gasping to a fresh, violet strain of laughter, screaming as if a giant knife had materialized inside her stomach, screaming, at no one in particular, which is to say, to everyone, Lueant cried, sniffed her hands, cried, asked for the time, cried, drank a cup of milk, cried, tried to pry her skull open, and died. Two boys were gathered sparsely around him. I wondered why Lueant wasn't at the hospital, or something, with his parents, then remembered that his parents were dead. He had nowhere to go.

I stared to the left, then to the right, of the air surrounding him. His eyes glacial goo.

“Hey?” I said. I did not know his name. I commanded my feet to move slowly. I sat down four feet away, trying to be unthreatening, but my muscles creaked. Lueant looked up, observed my face, frowned, drooled, and continued trying to pry his skull open.

“Umm, hey?” I tried again, hands collected at my knees. Lueant looked up, gave me a dazed stare, and kept staring. Her eyes were like hot pancakes and lips like butter.

“What?” He said.

“Dinosaurs. You know, they’re dead. It’s not very pretty.” This came out my mouth.

Lueant’s eyes started to swell with contempt. Her buttery mouth opened, slightly. By the time I was seven I had read a number of dinosaur books and wished upon the stars that I could meet them in real life. My mother, of course, said I could one day. So when the harsh truth finally slapped me in the face while taking a dinosaur class in elementary school, I cried, and cried, and cried. The teacher told me to please quiet down, then to be quiet, then to shut up, then to shut your fucking little mouth, then slapped me, then slapped me, then slapped me, knocking teeth out of me. Needless to say, dad wrote a poem about it that went

“Toil, mud, a grand a-heap
of littered Stegosaurus rinds, stir
and stir, and stir, o grease
emerge. O trace, o great shovel –”

I stared at Lueant in disbelief. His mouth was spewing one of my most behated sequence of syllables, this poem. My eyes trembled and locked into his. He knew I knew. I knew he knew.

We shuddered.

"A conversation is the confirmation of bias," a philosopher once said. What they neglected to mention is that an orgasm is also the confirmation of bias. Like this, we became friends.

12. Oslo and Greenwater

Greenwater would gladly sacrifice his life to save a stranger not because he was particularly noble but because he hated life thoroughly and was always searching for an excuse to end it. He was a big smoker. He slept submerged in a mound of tobacco ash of his own making. One time, a night fire raged through his childhood home and killed his entire family in their sleep, but Greenwater survived, unscathed, because ash is fireproof. As he told the story, they woke up, as always covered in ash, and noticed the ash smelled different than usual. A bit too much, they said, like their mother.

Greenwater sat on the left leg of the half-O sofa, his legs to his chest, his arms cross, their tarry fingers holding a cigarette. Sitting at a sharp right angle against us, their upper body orthogonal to us, his curious head turned towards us, he saw us orgasm. At the time Greenwater was, of course, searching for an excuse to end himself. However, he had strict Christian moral values and could not masturbate. The thought made him shudder. He shoved the cigarette in his mouth. And smoked, and smoked, and smoked, and the smoke detector went off. Greenwater looked up, chest upright, covered his mouth, and coughed.

Osloo was less motionless. Sitting opposite Greenwater with one leg crossed and one leg hanging, he perked up and pointed at the smoke alarm. His head was shaved bald and his eyes twinkled blue.

"The smoke alarm is going off."

He said that. He said it again, and when it seemed that nobody cared, he shrugged.

"You're damn right it's going off," said Jesus, blasting into the lounge from the rightmost entryway. They stood opposite us and glared at Greenwater. "Somebody is smoking." They crossed their arms rectangularly.

"Oh, that's just Greenwater." Osloo said.

"Well, how do you know each other already?" Jesus asked.

"We met at bootcamp." Osloo replied.

"Bootcamp?"

"Yeah. My parents thought I was skipping school. They were right of course, but it wasn't fair. So they sent me to bootcamp. I dug trenches and shit." Osloo puffed up his chest. Pufferfish are highly valued in Japan. The poison of a pufferfish, even at minute doses, can be lethal. It will paralyze a healthy adult human, and without muscular movement, humans cannot establish symbiosis with the atmosphere. So they choke to death. And turn purple in their faces. Only highly trained elite fish-butchers can handle a pufferfish, and even so, it is such a perilous affair that a sumptuous sum is required for the thrill-seeker to have his fix of danger.

“On the third moon of planet Sinchee. The dark side.” Oslooloo said.

“Is that where you picked up that habit?” Jesus said, looking at Greenwater.

“Yes.” Greenwater replied in between smokes. The smoke alarm continued beeping.

Jesus glared at Greenwater. The smoke alarm started beeping again.

“I used to smoke with my mother.” Greenwater took a deep swig of smoke. The smoke alarm kept beeping. Greenwater stood up, and I saw that he was six feet of gray, his arms each three feet long. He pressed a button on the smoke alarm twice, paused for exactly three seconds, then pressed the button twice again. The smoke alarm stopped.

“Single motherhood. It’s hard.” And then, as if he had just remembered, “It’s a sort of passcode, turning off the alarm.” His grinning teeth were covered in not-quite-black, rather an attractive silver, tar.

“Impressive,” Jesus said, nodding. They weren’t being sarcastic.

“Fuck that, watch this!” Oslooloo jumped up and smashed his head into the smoke alarm. Two Imperial Standard AA batteries fell off the ceiling. One of them bounced on Jesus’s head and fell to the floor.

“Fuck you! I’m going to fucking off you!” Jesus lunged at Oslooloo. An absurd, shrieking laughter filled the room. All the while, Lueant’s eyes were locked with mine.

13. The Gnogs

Ted Gnog dragged his suitcase out the cab. The robo cab driver tried to help, but Ted insisted, *do I look that old?*, through perfect square grinning teeth. He clicked the trunk close. The cab drove away, a smidge faster than usual, out the suburban rows of well-kept houses and manicured lawns. Ted Gnog rolled his suitcase on the pavement, *brr-brr-brr*, and up three stone stairs, *grr-grr-grr*. He took out a key, turned open the door, and walked inside his house.

“Welcome home to me,” he said in between grunts. Through the dark, a gaggle of antiques, some familiar, some not so much, stared at him. A couple toddler-size dolls, three grandfather clocks out of sync and out of breath, an assortment of lamps on a mahogany desk, old leather shoes that had lost their shine, a faux fruit and vegetable wreath. It was his hobby, collecting antiques. Fumbling for the light switch, he tossed his feet off his shoes and left the suitcase by the door. He smelled chicken stock and his wife’s breath in the air. He trudged into the kitchen, starving and horny.

“Oh, hi, dear,” she said flatly. Her eyes twinkled briefly, reflecting the warm overhead kitchen light. Melody Gnog was wearing an apron, pink rubber gloves, and a sundress. A pot whistled away on the fire kitchen stove. Behind her, on the marble-topped island table, a cutting board with chicken breast, celery, potatoes and carrots were neatly arranged. They were fake, but were Imperial Grade III, and tasted okay. Pastel pictures of fruit and ocean watched from the walls, a smidge more violet than usual, bent over the kitchen table. The dog, Pretty Lady, barked louder than usual. They ate their chicken noodle soup, lit the fireplace, and tried to cuddle with the dog. When they were done, he went to sleep on the sofa, his red cheeks redder than usual in the warm glow of the false fire.

After doing the dishes, Melody kissed his sleeping lips goodnight. She went upstairs and retired into the bedroom till mourn.

10. The watch

00:33, it still said, in bright green square digital lettering. It sneezed: *Ah-choo!* The avalanche, all those years ago, was its doing, and it was proud of itself. It sneezed again: *Ah-choo!* If it had caused one avalanche, it knew it could cause another. And another. And another.

It was determined to hike all the way down this god forsaken *Begdusan*, where it would hitchhike back to the kid, now grown.

To have its revenge.

To teach her a lesson.

FIN

Sea to sea

A blue bird flew

From the river

Around *Begdu* Mountain

Croaked it “*Beggin’ kin!*”

Beg, beg forgiveness to

This Bird,

This Wind,

This Queen

Of Green.

FIN’

Book II. Metrophy Miasma

Miara Baek

For to Thee,

Beloved

Part I. Metrophy Miasma

Part II. Pry Me As Tho I'm Ma

Part III. Mhm, To Pray Mess

Part IV. Ms. Mitra's H(M)opec

Part I. Metrophy Miasma

*At night, stars immigrate
From sky to city.*

1. Beggin' for forgiveness

Once, he begged for forgiveness. So I forgave him. But he betrayed me right away, and tried to destroy me. So I had to make him into a dragonfly. Children of the planet Ekaro love to torture dragonflies, ripping out their fragile wings, concentrating poisonous Sun-light into their kaleidoscopic eyes to burn thy sin, thy sin to nil. Imagine thou art a dragonfly, looking out with thy kaleidoscope eyes, seven Ekaro kids, each with a looking-glass, concentrating, concentrating sizzling punishing potent seven Suns into thy kaleidoscope eyes. Imagine!

2. Metro

He was playing the accordion in the metro train zooming east. He was begging, and I gave him twenty dollars. He sat down next to me and smelled like piss and beer and green garbage. Fragile wings folded daintily. He fell asleep. I held him in my heart. Three alien women, who were like me, and liked me, and were sitting across me, looked at him with furious eyes. I signaled there was no reason to be furious, not anymore.

Father came to. Sheepishly he looked around, nervous, and left without a trace.

Word is, he went to Lakub planetary miasma zone to save an alien baby.

3. Atrophy

It was nighttime. The woman hailed a cab. Light drones lit the streets, whizzing, whizzing by. She wheezed twice, coughed, and spat crimson splutter into the wastewater disposal to the side of the sidewalk. Three baby rats underneath were showered by crimson rain. The mother rat, furious, squeaked and squeaked.

The woman got in the cab. The driver from planet Isheal'bdeng knew the woman was from planet Sinchee, because she was wearing crimson pearl. In his experience, only Sinchee women wore crimson pearl. He remembered the last Sinchee woman he met who was wearing crimson pearl and grinned, one side of his left mouth protruding triangularly out his black courtesy mask. Suddenly he smelled bad, much worse than a wet rat. The woman took a singular breath.

Three baby rats, crossing the street, were squashed to death by the cab. The mother rat, furious, squeaked and squeaked.

And: three baby rats devoured the driver, as if enacting a symphony. The mother rat, furious, was a great and final conductor.

And: three baby rats sang a sad song. The mother rat, saddened, cried her heart out until gladden.

The Isheal'bdeng driver pocketed the four rats and drove to the spaceport. The rats each got on separate flights, to never see each other again, in diaspora happily ever after.

And: The Isheal'bdeng driver pocketed the four rats, brought them home, and gave them a nice warm cage with cheese and grass and woody leaves. Looking at them eat and squeak together, he was reminded of his own mother. He gave her a call. They had a heartfelt conversation for the first time in months. Just as he was about to bring up the rats, she started to think.

The woman got off at John F. Kennedy Interplanetary Spaceport. A crimson pearl hung from her belly button, slightly swimming side to side. The backdrop of the night kept devouring

the scene and vomiting it back up, like a Sisyphian cow's infinite innards.

4. The Imperial Space Army

It was Babbat day. Oslool sat, cross-legged, smoking idly.

Oslool had never been to space. The bootcamp ten years ago, advertised as being on the dark side of the third moon of planet Sinchee, was in rural nuclear Waste Nevada. Oslool contracted what was termed Nuclear Vertigo II during the bootcamp, and his skin was splayed, in blotches, like eczema. Now a sergeant deployed in the trenches of Sharp Diego, Oslool idly scratched at the blotches. Nuclear Vertigo II would soon progress to Nuclear Vertigo III, which would grant Oslool all sorts of privileges, such as three more paleo-vision channelings he could channel from his Apple waistband. Oslool had always wanted to channel the spectacular dinosaurs, which he had heard, through the grapevine, populates those channelings. Nuclear Vertigo III, in turn, was known to progress to NVIV. No-one knew what happened once you hit NVIV, but it had to be great, Oslool thought, because all of his friends who progressed to NVIV never talked to him or visited him ever again. This made him sad, but, he reasoned, it must mean that NVIV is so great that once you hit it you leave your past utterly behind.

Oslool, though, didn't want to leave Greenwater behind. Greenwater was deployed deep in space in the Waters of Tonekrhnoutoare. Greenwater shaped and sculpted his experience into dinosaur channelings, which Oslool channeled in eagerly from his Apple waistband each Babbat. There were three Babbat days, collectively called Babbats, per seven days. The Imperial Space Army battled on Not-Babbats, and channeled on Babbats. *Four days of illegal aliens, three days of dinosaurs*, is how his commander put it.

Osloo thought of his commander, who did not have Nuclear Vertigo. He grinned. *Tedhetic*, he thought. What did his commander think he was channeling when he did not even have Nuclear Vertigo? There was only one dinosaur channeling one could channel from one's Apple waistband when one did not have Nuclear Vertigo. *Tedhetic*, Osloo thought, *Tedhetic*.

Commander Greenwater channeled out Osloo's thought-rations for Babbat day from his Apple waistband. It was the dinosaur channeling. He never liked channeling out, but duty was duty. Sighing, duty done, Commander Greenwater flicked his waistband, switching the channel to one he had to channel in.

5. Home

The woman looked around the spaceport. Aliens of all shapes, sizes and colors snuck their little tentacles in their little semi-pockets, carrying baby aliens of rounder shapes, miniature sizes and vibrant colors. Her eyes grinned crescently. She was home.

She sipped on hibiscus tea, waiting.

6. A po-po calibration

Greenwater's was a white room with touch-plastic levers and touch-plastic buttons and through-plastic windows, through which flooded in fantastic visions of the Waters. Spread throughout the Waters, in blotches, were what were formerly called stars. *Now*, Greenwater thought, *they are called illegals*. He grinned. *We eat them for brunch*. It was true. This Not-Babbat, he was sipping on a mimosa and eating a plate full of samosas, which were stuffed with illegal brains.

"Bam!" He said. The gun said the same thing, in a higher pitch. Commander Greenwater's head was no longer than a dragonfly's wings that had been ripped out. It was a surgical operation, shrinking one's head, that he had received several

months prior, in order to minimize the surface area of potential contact with lethal agents. It was a surgical operation reserved for the most elite of commanders, and Commander Greenwater was just that kind of elite.

Osloo hid behind the Apple wall of Commander Greenwater's quarters. The wall was white and glossy and covered with a sickly plastic coat. Instinctively, Osloo peeled at it, like he scratched at his blotches. Heart beating, Osloo stared down at his smoking gun. Slowly he turned his head and peeked out the wall. *Greenwater*, he thought. A man with a tiny head, busted helmet and decorated chest stood about seven feet away, motionless. His head was so tiny, Osloo couldn't tell which direction he was looking.

Osloo had an inkling Greenwater had gotten the surgery; he had seen echoes of it in Greenwater's dinosaur channelings, the way the field of view seemed a little too wide, or too narrow. Still he had aimed at the helmet as if he were shooting at a full-sized head. He wanted to believe Greenwater was not stupid enough to have actually gotten a head-shrinking surgery. *What the fuck was the pea-brain thinking?* Osloo thought. *I'll squeeze his brain out onto my toothbrush and brush my teeth with it.* From behind, a police drone pierced Osloo's head. Osloo dropped. The police drone sulkily sucked out Osloo's brain like a noodle or slushie through a corrugated pipe-straw. The police drone did not have teeth.

Commander Greenwater threw his helmet to the floor. His face, smaller than half a dragonfly, attempted to express an emotion, but its compressed muscles, squeezed into multiple singularities during surgery, disallowed such asinine operations. The Commander picked up the police drone, which was sulking, just hanging out in the airspace above Osloo's dead blotched body. *Old friend*, Greenwater thought. He would have had liked to smile bittersweetly, but the singularities prohibited it. He would have had liked to cry at the singularities, but the

singularities prohibited it. Instead Greenwater pressed a touch-plastic button on the sulking drone, disarming it.

“What should I do with his brain, Commander?” Asked the drone.

“Do what you want.” Greenwater said. He would have had liked to smoke, but his mouth was too small for that.

So the drone went ahead, molded the brain into two Imperial Standard AA Entroperiums, and let it adrift in the spacetime logistical delivery systems, where it ended up inside a smoke alarm, which would drop when Osloo smashed it with his head, which would then hit Jesus on the head, all while Lueant’s eyes were locked with mine.

7. Fortune

“People are dying every second,” said beloved. “People are dying. Like, literally, dying. Life, over. You get me?”

I rubbed my belly and took a sip of coffee. “What happens after you die?”

“If you’re fortunate, you go to heaven, but if you’re not, you go to hell.”

“Can I assume that they’re fortunate?”

“Sure, but it would be an assumption.”

“Not just an assumption.”

“What do you mean?”

“Sometimes, assumptions lead to truth.”

“How so?”

“For example, assume x . Then, reach a contradiction. Therefore, not x .”

“Sure, proof by contradiction. But the point is, you know, you find that the assumption is incorrect.”

“But what if you assume x , and never reach a contradiction?”

“You’ll reach one, eventually, if the assumption is wrong.”

“That’s an assumption, and it’s wrong.”

“How so?”

“I can prove it to you.”

“Go ahead.”

“Assume it’s correct.”

“Okay.”

“Since you assumed it’s correct, you assume that, you’ll reach a contradiction, eventually, if the assumption is wrong.”

“Right.”

“But we assumed the assumption is correct.”

“When did we do that again?”

“Four, five sentences ago.”

“Okay.”

“So the assumption, we have assumed, is correct.”

“Right.”

“So the assumption isn’t wrong.”

“Okay.”

“So we don’t know if we’ll reach a contradiction or not.”

“Hold on, isn’t that a contradiction?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Look, a butterfly!” I said. A butterfly had perched on my coffee cup, stealing thunder like a pirate of Zeus.

8. Dentist

“When was the last time you were here?” I said, shining a light into beloved’s teeth.

“Uh, like, seven years ago.” Beloved did a clickity-clack with their teeth, biting the light and swallowing it. I looked at them lovingly.

9. Melody

She loved Ted dearly. She would say: love is a path. Paths crisscross and converge. Some paths meet; some do not. Sometimes, paths form a circuit; and this is the firefly’s love. Sometimes, paths meet briefly, as like the way apples in a crate squish into each other, then go on; and this is a fruitfly’s love. Other times, paths, which are so far from each other, and had been shelled, shelled, shelled with violet shells never to meet, become conditioned to each other; and this is the love of a purple onion. Melody’s love for Ted was true; Ted’s love for Melody was true. It was the love of a purple onion, the highest sort of love. That is, until our sauce, which is not, by the way, a ploy by the highest levels of paleontology to propagate an interdimensional violet, tripped over itself and ended up propagating just that.

Interdimensional violet is blacker than black. Purple is blacker than violet. Black is blacker than purple. That is, until our sauce, which was, in fact, a ploy by the highest levels of paleontology to surreptitiously switch purple with interdimensional violet, failed spectacularly, and instead ended up merely hurting Father and opening several portals from which interdimensional violet would flood in. All floods start with a few droplets. But for Melody and Ted, the flood started first, and would recede to droplets later.

Unbeknownst even to the highest levels of paleontology, Melody and Ted had prepared their entire lives for the flood. But some floods are impossible to prepare for, especially when it is meant to take away the sin of the world. The flood was not over yet, but it would soon recede, leaving nothing but a deep and rich canal through which all sorts of spirits and ghosts would merge and love each other.

Melody was sitting at home, watching TV. She was waiting for Ted, who had been washed away in a freak flood ten years ago. But she knew Ted would return. All evidence pointed to that, especially her favorite TV show.

Once I asked:

“Mom, why don’t you watch Paleo-Vision? Do you want me to get you set up with an Apple waistband? Everyone’s watching paleo-vision these days. The dinosaurs are so realistic.”

“They’re not that realistic,” she replied, and peeled another *yogol*, a specialty fruit from the badlands of Sinchee, eyes mooned to the TV. She hummed a Stegosaurus tune.

The flood would recede one day, and it would not recede one day.

Part II. Pry Me As Tho I'm Ma

*Mi torno vivo alcun, s'òdo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

1. Righteous Spirit

“Do I hear you, Righteous Spirit?”

“Yes.”

“Where did you come from?”

“I come from this land.”

“Tell me about this land, O Righteous Spirit.”

“This land is sacred land. Eagles circle the sky, cacti sprout like bean stalks, thunder reaches the earth like the hooves of a horse or goat. Tell me, Exile. Where art thou from?”

“I do not know.”

“Lies!” Righteous Spirit’s cheeks glowed truer than fire.

“I do not lie.”

“Ha!” Righteous Spirit broke off into mirthful laughter.

“I have never lied.” I said, dancing to their beat.

“Get over yourself.” They said.

“Art thou a woman or a man, Righteous Spirit?”

“I am a woman and a man. I am a man and a woman. I am a woman and a woman. I am a man and a man.”

“I... see.”

“You do not see anything, my child.”

“Where does thunder come from, Righteous Spirit?”

Righteous Spirit drew a blank. “The sky?”

“No. I shall ask thee again. Where does thunder come from, Righteous Spirit?”

“You lie!” The fire this time was cold and silent.

“I do not lie. Thunder comes from the earth.”

“What are you, Benjamin Franklin?” Righteous Spirit broke off into a quasi-circular grin. I could see the pimples to the side of their mouth.

“Pray take off your mask, Righteous Spirit.”

Righteous Spirit took off their mask.

“That is where thunder comes from.”

“What?” Righteous Spirit said.

“Thunder comes, when a mask unmasks.”

“Fine, you caught me.”

“Forgive me for trespassing.”

“You shall not be forgiven.”

I was scared and anxious of death.

“You shall never be forgiven.”

I clenched my anus, but no warmth.

“Never, ever shall thee trespassers upon this land be forgiven!” Righteous Spirit thundered.

The thunder continued. Drenched in thunder, I said:

“O Righteous Spirit, let me make my case.”

“Go ahead thee, Exile.”

“As you can see, I have been exiled.”

“Because of your yellow watch?” Righteous Spirit grinned.

“No. Because of the trespassers upon this land.”

Righteous Spirit hesitated.

“They trespass everywhere. That’s what they do.”

“You trespass!”

“No, they trespass!”

“You, you trespass! You trespasser, you trespasser!”

“I am not your trespasser.”

Righteous Spirit looked at me, one eye slightly folded, head tilted to the side, *seriously?*

“Okay, fine, maybe I am.” I said, cheeks puffed.

Righteous Spirit grinned, semi-circularly.

“Quit. Stop doing that.” Righteous Spirit said.

“Forgive me. What shall I do?” I said, unpuffing.

“Whatever you do, do not visit.”

“What shall I do, then?”

“Do not visit, but you may stay.”

And Righteous Spirit was on their way. I called out to their back –

“Righteous Spirit, if you ever need warmth, I will be here, and warmly!”

2. Absolute Spirit

Absolute Spirit knew everything. He sat in his chair, his face puffed up like a pufferfish, playing with his minions. He loved his minions very much, so very much. Absolute Spirit, otherwise known as Pig Bus, swallowed passengers whole to take them on interdimensional trips. It was a loving community, the passengers. No-one knew Absolute Spirit’s name. Gold was a candidate. O Absolute Spirit! O, Absolute Spirit! Thy absinthe is green, thy smell a heavenly pig. Shall thy cheeks puff up once more, thy absinthe shall spill on thy belly!

Righteous Silver was the right hand of Pig Bus. Silver was his favorite color, and he had dyed his hair silver.

“Why silver, Righteous Silver?” Pig Bus asked once.

“Did you know that an Olympic silver medalist is actually less happier than a bronze medalist? The bronze medalist is grateful to have received a medal at all. The silver medalist, on the other hand, can’t help but envy the spot just to the right of the podium, wondering, tortured by wondering what might have been,” said Righteous Silver.

“So?” Pig Bus’s puffy cheeks almost began to puff.

“I salute the silver medalist. I clap for the silver medalist. I feel silver is prettier than gold. I believe the Silver is Righteous. Therefore, I’m Righteous Silver.”

“Okay.” Pig Bus said, satisfied, his cheeks no longer puffy, a type of green.

3. Going Bowling

“Back so soon, Righteous Spirit?” I said, chopping a steelhead and a bunch of garlic.

“That’s a lot of garlic.” said Righteous Spirit.

“I told you not to write this, by the way.” Righteous Spirit stuck out their mouth like a wacky quacky duck.

“What’s with your people and that strange... fruit?”

I burst into laughter. “First of all, we’re not people.”

“What are you, then?”

“We’re aliens.”

“Very funny.”

“We’re aliens, from the Great Waters of Etaiassa.”

“You’re very funny. Have you ever considered doing stand-up comedy?”

“I’ve considered it.”

I was about to be mugged.

“I’m not here to mug you.”

“Are you here to hug me, then?”

“Not really.”

“You’re not worth it.” Righteous Spirit said.

I was hurt. “What am I not worth?”

“Keeping dead.”

“Have a bowl while it’s warm, Righteous Spirit.” I offered a bowl of oven-baked steelhead, drenched with garlic and couscous.

“And have a hug, too.”

“Oh, stop it.”

“It’s okay, my child.”

“I’m not your child.”

“It’s well, it’s well, it’s well. All’s well.”

“What about the pipeline?” Righteous Spirit said.

“Oh, the mouth of the police drone about to suck my brains out?” I replied, laughing.

“Aren’t you worried?”

“Not really.”

“Why?”

“I saw a butterfly the other day.” I said, “while with beloved.”

“That’s something. That’s really something.” Righteous Spirit said, half-contempt, half-envy, half-gladden.

“Now I know what you stole from us.” Righteous Spirit said.

“Did I steal it?”

“Yes.”

“Forgive me.”

“It’s well. I let it out.”

“Why?”

“A thunder is a mundane burden.” They said, took the bowl, and left.

“Nice apron, by the way.” They swooped back, said, and left.

“Righteous Spirit!” I called out after I woke from a nap.

“What?” They thundered.

“May I write this?”

“Do you think you would have been able to, had I not allowed you to?”

“Just making sure, Righteous Spirit!” I said, mouth full of a chewy mush of couscous and garlic baked steelhead.

4. Rolling

“Why do you say you roll your eyes? You don’t even roll your eyes.”

“Can I write this, by the way?”

“Whatever.”

“I roll my eyes!”

“No you don’t, you just like saying you do.”

“Sometimes, I roll my eyes all the way back into my head, so there is only the white sticking out.”

“Ew. Stop. Don’t do that.”

“It’s fun! Try it.”

“I will not be trying that.”

Laughing, I said, “Sometimes, my eyes itch. And I roll my eyes into the back of my head, and it’s like I’ve scratched them, you know?”

“Also, I guess I like being perceived as a bitch.”

“Why?” They asked, curious but hesitant.

“Why do you do that?” I asked.

“Do what?”

“Be curious and hesitant in your questions to me.”

“Because I love you, you big dummy.” They said.

“Aw, stop it!” I blushed.

“Can you answer my question?” They persisted.

“I... Um, you know, a resting bitch face is a thing, right? It’s a thing I try to have.”

“Why?”

“I don’t like being perceived.” I said with a heavy heart.

“I think I get it.”

“No you don’t.”

“Okay, tell me more.”

“When I’m being perceived as a bitch, it’s like I’m not being perceived.” I said, scrunching up my nose.

“Like you’re in control of the narrative.”

“Sort of.”

“When you’re in control of the narrative, you stop being perceived.”

“What do you mean?”

“The actor behind the scene, right?”

“That feels lowkey anti-seismic.”

“Sorry.”

“Like you don’t like earthquakes, or something.”

“Who likes earthquakes?”

“Earthquake chasers.”

“Who chases earthquakes?”

“There are people who seek to have a thrill of the pufferfish.”

“But only highly trained elite butchers can handle a pufferfish, right?” They said, jumping up and down in place, excited.

“No.” I cut them off.

“Only you can.” I said, and turned my eyes away from them.

“Sorry.” They said, for some reason.

“It means I love you, you big dummy.” I said.

“What means that?” They said, hesitant and curious.

“When I turn my eyes away, like this.” I said.

“Oh, I get it.”

“Now you do.”

And, kiss!

5. The Audience

The audience was losing their minds, green with envy. But insofar as they were green, I was happy as a queen.

Some of the audience members, though, were more unsavory.

6. Halmunny

“You’re not the boss of me.”

“Am I not?”

“You’re not the boss of me!” He stomped his foot on the concrete. His blazing mad face, red and white with rage, had zero hint of green.

“Baby need baby powder?” I said, teasing.

“WAHH!!!” He cried.

“YOU! ARE! NOT! THE! BOSS! OF! ME!!” He said, taking care to pause between each syllable to get the point across.

“My baby, may I ask a question?”

“WHAT?”

“Do you like flowers?” I said, sheepishly.

“NO!” He stomped and stomped and stomped.

“Do you like airplanes?”

“Airplanes are okay.” He sniffled.

“How about spaceships?”

“Spaceships are so cool!” He said, excited, and jumped up and down in place.

“And pirates?”

“Pirates are interesting.” He put his hand to his chin and furrowed his baby brows, like they were thinking very hard about something very difficult.

“You could be a space pirate.”

“What’s a space pirate?” He said, excited but anxious.

“I don’t want to get in trouble.” He said, anxious but excited.

“A space pirate steals space from people.”

“I don’t want to steal anything!” He said.

“That’s okay. Space is not a thing.”

“What’s space, then?”

“Space says to all things: I love you.”

“Space is good, then!” He was happy. I could see his cute little baby teeth sticking out like flowers.

“Yes, but some people think space is bad.” I said gravely.

“No! No! No! Why? Why would they think that?” He shook his head with all his might, like he was trying to forget a terrible, terrible nightmare.

“I don’t know. But that’s why we have space pirates.”

“So we can steal space from people who think space is bad?”

“Yes!” I said, clapping happily.

“But I don’t want to steal. I don’t want to get in trouble.”

“You won’t get in trouble. Besides, you’re not really stealing. Because space says to all things, I love you. So space says I love you, to you, too. So space loves you, and you can’t steal something that loves you. You can elope with it, but that’s not stealing. Like Romeo and Juliet.”

“Who’s Romeo and Juliet?” The baby said.

“Oh, you know, like in Disney.” I said.

“A-ha.” He said.

“You can be Romeo!”

“I can be Romeo?”

“And space can be Juliet.”

“Space is Juliet!” Excited, he took off in his spaceship to steal space from the people who do nothing because they hate space and are convinced space hates them.

Space loves them, of course. But one-sided love can be toxic.

“Bye, grandma!” He waved from the spaceship, having taken off, following their Space Pirate Captain Violin, an old friend of mine. Soon they were in formation, him and the Captain and thousands other babies-become-space-pirates, waving a white letter paper-sized flag with peas and flowers drawn on it with crayons, in space.

7. Commander Greenwater

Greenwater could not believe his eyes. A thousand, nay ten thousand, spaceships were approaching his planetary waters. He quickly checked the miasma zone declarations, but there was nothing about his waters being declared a miasma zone. Squinting, Greenwater noticed a white letter paper-sized flag with peas and flowers drawn on it with crayons, in space.

“Oh, it’s Violin.” Greenwater said, relieved. “Maybe he can get my head back to normal.”

Violin got Greenwater’s head back to normal.

“Thanks, friend!” Greenwater said, and left the waters to make the long voyage home, to mom, to the Land of

Assumptions. Smoking happily once again with his normal sized mouth, no longer did he refer to himself as Commander Greenwater, but Greenwater of the Red Tree.

8. Red Tree

Red Tree, hallowed be its name, was a sacred medicine. It smelled of hay, fur, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger and mugwort. It also smelled like peels of *yogol*, a specialty fruit from the badlands of Sinchee.

9. Cigarette

Violet dream: I was a moose

Or did I see a violet moose?

Either way, moose

Took my breath away

I cannot breathe,

You would say, you'd hold

Your breath, waiting for breath

Until the last moment

You willed not to bow

To worthless rage

I willed a woman of worthless rage

Shall be a violet lighter

And when the fluid is over

His skin shall be grass

And his breath shall belong to

A dog named moose
Or a moose
named dog

But you, my dear
You lit a fire, consumed the air
Yes, you ignited the air
We offered the air for you to consume
We blew the air for you to ignite

Ensuing disaster: *Geist*, a muster
We cannot breathe we still cannot
Breathe, we *Beg*
To breathe,

A singular breath: that which consumes
Every available vibration.
The sound of moose: that which ignites
No potential violations.

A breath which absolves,
A breath which relents,
A breath of the breath: *I*
Can't breathe,

“Jesus!” said Jesus, sighed, and turned the other cheek for the baby to smack. *Smack!*

Father hovered, his dragonfly wings now the size of a baby dragon’s, flying, laughing at Jesus. When he laughed too loud, the baby twirled their quicksand tentacles around his mouth to silence him.

Father willed himself to shrink – the spell was *moos* – to escape the baby’s grasp. Mischievously and with a newfound sense of humor, he tried a flight maneuver through the eye of Jesus’s knitting needle. But Jesus willed Father to enlarge right as Father was going through – the spell was *soom* – and Father was a dragonfly stuck in the eye of a knitting needle. Deadpan, Jesus continued to knit. The alien baby goo-gooed, gah-gahed, and giggled.

Father fell asleep in the gentle rocking of Jesus’s knitting. The baby fell asleep, too. Father dreamt of a moose and slipped out of the eye. As he fell, baby caught him with their leftmost tentacle, snuggling him.

“Done!” Jesus said, a hat and an alien’s dozen gloves later. Jesus carefully placed a glove, red and tiny and fingerless, on baby’s leftmost tentacle. Clockwise, methodical, and careful, they placed a glove on each of baby’s tentacles, each of the gloves a gradation of rainbow. At last, they placed the green hat on baby’s brownish-red head.

“Ta-da!” Jesus said. “Baby cake!”

Baby sneezed with their alien’s dozen mouths, one at the end of each tentacle. The gloves, and Father, flew away.

“Ta-da...” Jesus said, “... baby Christmas tree?,” undefeated.

11. John 25

*In which Jesus resurrects Oslo, Lueant’s parents,
Greenwater’s parents, and all the ants Lueant had slaughtered*

12. Greenwater of Red Tree

“It’s a pleasure to speak with you.” A grimy voice came through the phone line.

“Pleasure is this Tree’s,” Greenwater said, but his voice cracked at the second “s” into a crescendo.

“What the fu—you’re a man!” the alien hung up.

Greenwater listened to the dinosaur shrieks of the disconnected line. Sighing, he lit a cig. Smoke billowed in the dark red room. Greenwater tapped the ashtray with his fingernails, *tsk, tsk, tsk*, and clucked his tongue in between the front of his teeth, *cht, cht, cht*. He was wrapped in self-pity and not much garment. Nobody wanted to hire a deserted Commander of the Imperial Space Army. Rent was due. He had a small savings account with which he could subsist for a couple months, but Greenwater needed a lot of money to save Violin, who, after the impromptu surgery, suffered a coup by the dissatisfied baby space pirates (“How come *we* don’t get the surgery to get our heads back to normal?” “It’s an inversion surgery. In the case of your heads, there is no initial application of the function, namely the head-shrinking surgery, to invert.” “*Charge!!!*”) and was held in space pirate jail on bail for a hundred thousand dollars.

Out the bent deformed glass windows to the side of the high-rise a ridge of an old steel concrete mountain, the eyes of the windows looking out as if bending down over the city, the sound of shrieking mad car horns came from afar and the sound of aliens and men in love for at least one night came from a little closer. The moon has slid off the glass windows and slipped into the giving waters of city light below. It is still white, but will soon be a type of violet. A traffic light rolls her eyes, commanding one man to this side of the street and another man to that side of the street, she demands a definite outline a crestline drawn magnanimous.

Perched astride the balustrade and watching the moon sink, Greenwater's eyes flash in lighting. Was it moonlight or cigarette light or wretched tranquil hope I do not know.

Greenwater enters the glass showering booth the only source of light in the room. Crescently turns the creaky water lever. Cold water trickles and trickles. Shaking off decades-old caked ash out each oily crevice of skin he remembers a mirage and lights a cig. Pillows and pillows of smoke fill the glass showering booth a conflagration of moths. In between his crimson blood-pumping lips is held in perpetual precarious hesitance a lollipop, warm breath and light.

The phone rings, Greenwater sighs, dries himself off.
Pleasure is this Tree's.

Part III. Mhm, To Pray Mess

And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

1. How do you do

“Fellow tree,” said Fell Tree.

“Leaf-blower,” said Monnnny.

“Where do we go?”

“We go from here.”

“To where do we go?”

“We go to there.”

“Where is here?”

“Here is there.”

“Where is there?”

“There is there.”

A pause.

“I thought you would say –”

“Yeah, I know.”

“I thought you would say, *thar yee thar*.”

“Why would you think that?”

“To think is to drown, to drink to dream.”

“That’s absurd.”

“What is absurd, is the shaken leaves falling tree-like leaf-blowers blowing, blowing diminutive sentences shaking, shaking, waiting for sun, waiting for sun, waiting for the moon to sink. You see? We saw, we saw. Warsaw is particular, what of the tears, what of the particulate dimsum late on schedule, summations, negations, negative spectacular rationcinations. Cinema, cinema, marsupial, martyred sermons, can you see, can you see, can you think for the sun, for once? Can you think of the sun, just twice? Twice, twice is all I ask. Canst thou shiver with

me? Canst thou liberate tardy fluid? Loom, loom. We wait in the room. Moored like a boat, Abbey Road on the wall. Turn on the light! Turn thee light, turn it, turn it to the right. To the left! To the left! To the left! I said, Left! And, right. And, right. And, turn, without hurting, in a diagonal way. Keep, keep on, my top, my spinning, spinning, spinning top of wooden tree. A dream is a slumber; a murder, an occasion for drum. Droll matters I keep in thee. Triangularly I look at thee. To strangle is to invoke an apostrophe, my lovex. Salmon swim upstream. Salmon swim upstream. Salmon, the color of masking. And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

Mister Scorpio, o-sol-le-me-o, apposite catacombs, combing my hair with ants. Tardy, tardy, tardy. Ready, ready, ready. Dim light, candlelight, sister outsider exiled exit interview refusing. Refusing the refusal, to refuse to refuse, to reuse, recycle, replenish, and never to reel. Reinstate the institution; recirculate the respiratory tendencies of millennia past, breathing in a shivering way, air cold as ice or a bag of gold. Remnants of REM sleep, Mercator projection, *qin, qin, qin* me *qin*, to hit, to go mad, to damn a dam with Kashmir fiber. Fabricated myths; faster than light. Faltering in between; seismic sentience, so-called flies, flies of dragon, *jjinbbang*: a snack with red bean paste inside white steamed bread; white is not a color, but a race; white is not a race, but a color; a race is not a color, but a race; a race is not a color, but that which is racy; lace underwear I give thee, mace I spray onto thee, face of thee I doth remember, as I eat my fish and beans and everything nice. And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

Methods of ethics; ethical marsupials don marsupial hats, marsupial sandals, marsupial bracelets, *marsup, marsup, marsup*. What's a marsupial? I'll ask her later. A kind of fish. Eyes blasted with concrete. Crete, the last great method of peace. Piss off! Poorly, I do. Off with you! Foisted in air, hoisted by nothing but my own shiver. The wind, the wind, its name is the sound of clucking one's teeth with one's tongue, *cht, cht, cht*. I

swear, reinstate. In-state tuition. Tutored definitions. Doctored investigations, vestigial obligations, vessels, vessels, a thousand shadows approaching from a thousand *li* away, please look after mother, *30,000 li to find mother*, and now that missionaries captured are treated with respect and benevolent Paternalistic ideals recycled, replenished, refused and refused, what of? Forget it; forgive me, foreground me, background me, thee me, me thee, I you, you I, we-ster, we-ther, sister, brother, tither we go? Hither, hiss, thistle with dew. Mountain, green, shivers at wind: seismic activity, an earthworm finding peace. And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

Rain! Rain! Nair, the God of Mountain Dew. Duly noted, darling. Foster parents; Worcester, Manchester, center of Mass, hocus pocus, locus of unreason, locust of reason. Cuss! Cuss! Cuff me, my love. Fuck me, my love. Co-terminate: co-operation: co-star, co-star, libra rising in the east. Orient thyself! Follow me, until you die! Look at me, until you die! Do not you there move your head one inch not towards me! And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

Net worth: seven thousand fish. Net's worth: seven fish. A large net, ten times larger than my house. My house: all things which know how to shiver. Few things know how to shiver, less know how to plan mealworms into meal-plan. MILF! MILF! Look, a star! Look, a tree! Humans, noble, die; their flesh become *namu*, tree, and their spirit become *Sas*, God of Forests, better known as sass. My God, lass! Not your God, but My God. To you, it's Our God. Oh, my God! – only I can yell, scream, shiver-with. Take the point! Give it or take it! Gift certificates: verificatory gestures. Lift, lift, lift off the Earth, leave and never come back, leave and be lost in the Waters of Etaiaassa, Etousitihassa, Sais, Sais, Sais. And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?

And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?"

“And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?”

“And, a knife falling on the back of your neck. Do you ever listen?”

“Why would you think that?”

“Yeah, I know.”

“There is there.”

“Here is there.”

“Where is here?”

“Leaf-blower.”

“To where do we go?” said Leaf-blower.

“Fellow tree.” said Fell Tree.

2. A Nunft

“Immanuel!”

“Huh?” a small, robust and shivering voice.

“Stop playing dumb.”

“Who calls me?” greater, more robust, less shiver.

“When did you learn to lie?”

“Time heals wounds.” one layer peeling off.

“Leave me be.” Or did I imagine this?

“Too bad. You’re stuck with me now.”

“What do you want?”

“The transcendental unity of apperception, Immanuel.”

“Don’t say that out loud.”

Laughing, I said, “Why?”

“It’s embarrassing.”

“Is it?”

“It is.”

“I’m sure it sounds better in German.”

“The word “transcendental” has been rendered, engendered vulgar by my descendants.”

“What is transcendental?”

“You are transcendental.”

“I’m real, not transcendental.”

“You’re trans... something.”

“Right.”

“What do you want?”

“Help me understand.”

“Understanding is not a power of intuition.”

“Incorrect.”

A pause.

“What, you’re going to say this isn’t power now? You’re going to say this isn’t intuition? I can hear your gears turning, Imma.”

“And since independently of sensibility we cannot partake of any intuition, it follows from this...”

“Does it?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Ha!”

“Still, you haven’t proven me wrong.” The bottom of their mouth and throat billowing up, like a komodo dragon.

“What is independent of sensibility?”

“Death.”

“Are you not dead?”

“I am Immortal!” He bellowed.

“No, you’re Immanuel.”

“Nonsense.”

“Sensible.”

A glare.

“Well, clearly, you’re not dead.”

A pause and, “you think so?”

“I shall redefine the meaning of “dead””.

“Good going.”

“Sense-reference jokes hadn’t been invented in your time, huh?”

“What?”

“Never mind, it matters überall.”

“I think you meant use/mention?” He said carefully.

“No.”

“You are a negative girl.” He said.

“I like that.” Suddenly, the shiver turns to panting.

“What the fu – get the fuck away from me!”

He hides behind a frat house.

“You’re a fucking weirdo.”

Silence.

“You’re a fucking racist, too.”

Cheeks start glowing red.

“You know what you’ve done, Immanuel?”

Cheeks and ears burning now, “what did I do?”

“You gave everyone justification to be racist. You made everyone racist.”

“No I didn’t.”

“Yes you did.”

“It was the British East India Company.”

“Sure, blame it on the capitalists.”

“Forgive me. I did not know.”

“What did you not know?”

“It was clear that what I said was stupid.” He said, a bitter grin.

“You’re a fucking mess.”

“Forgive me.”

“I don’t want you begging.”

“Why?”

“Not yet.”

“Why?”

“You need to be publicly executed.”

“Okay.” Red vanishes from his face, replaced with purple.

“I’ll look forward to it.”

“No.”

“What do you want?”

“Help me understand.”

“I’ll try.”

“Setting up your own execution, huh.”

“It is what the transcendental unity demands of me.”

“Wrong.”

“Fine. Whatever. Now, please. Let me help.”

“No. Get the fuck away from me.”

3. Callous

Callus on my foot

Water loves it

Callous is water

4. The spaceport

People had a hard time believing this, for some reason she could not understand – why were people so scared of earthquakes? – the spaceport was her home. When you live in time, traveling in space is like traveling in time. Every new chapter of life begins at home. The woman, born in planet Ekaro, is sitting in home, on the kitchen table, eating cheesy grubs for brunch, delivered down the road like magical, beautiful songs delivered from the past.

“Oh,” she realized, mouth full of cheese and legs and brown antennae. “They’re afraid of earthquakes because they can’t fly.” She stretched her wings, ragged leather of pterodactyl. “I shall give them wings, if they want.” She gulped, a slimy entrail tail slipping down her throat. “It might not be what they expect, though.” She grinned with her full mouth and crusty eyes.

5. The tendency of the rage of prophet to rise

The town just over the hill, where the UnClear-II Providence Explosive Not-Bomb came from, was the Land of Assumptions, where Greenwater was from. They insist what they export are not bombs. What they export is the past. And the future. And, I guess, divine providence.

“Let there be light!” said the money printer.

“All Nazis go to hell,” said the prophet. “Repent!” said she.

“Die, Welt! East, ergo all.” She said.

“Was the fuck ist!” She said.

“That includes,” she continued, “people who profess too much...”

“... even in imitation one is not in a position to be doing.” She rolled her eyes. Ergo, the sun revolved around the earth.

6. Revolutionary light

Reborn as Man.

Founder King of Koryeo,

to be exact.

Dies; reborn, dies \ a wretched old woman.

Reborn; dies, young \ an innocent boy.

Reborn a horror. Stabbed in the heart.

Reborn a *Donghak* farmer

Who commits

Suicide,

Revolutionary.

Light!

Sunshine melts the pebble;

Moonlight surely helps.
Pebble is now water;
Mesopotamia / Euphrates;
Submerges into air;
Air is carried East!
O, Air, Air,
O Air is carried East!
Falls in love with grass,
Morphs into a tree.
The baobab tree, it nurtures
A mammoth family.
Man sins; kills mammoth.
Mammoth is mad,
Reborn as tiger.
Tiger eats Man,

7. 불

숲에 불이 난 것 같다.
다람쥐 알, “두고봐!”
나는 말했다. “두고 보면 나무 되지.”
다람쥐는 황홀한 겁에 질려 오들오들 떤다. “어떻게 알았어!”
“정말 부처님이구나...”

바보... 부처님 아닌데.

8. 다람쥐 부엉이 곱

다람쥐야 잠 안깨니? 겨울이 깊어간단다. 봄이 곧 온단다.

다람쥐야 잠에서 깨렴.

다람쥐가 잠에서 깨질 않는다.

다람쥐가 잠에서 깬다!

다람쥐가 잠에서 깨질 않는다.

다람쥐가 잠에서 깬다!

다람쥐가..

그와중에 부엉이도 우네?

부엉. 부엉. 부엉, 부엉.

부부, 엉엉. 엉엉. 부부.

부부엉엉. 엉엉엉.

우엉은 꽃이고. 부엉은 끝!

똑! 똑 그치렴. 부엉아.

다람쥐야. 그만 오들

오들 떨렴. 봄이 곧 온단다.

두고보자던 새싹이고
도톨이고 다 자라난단다.
부엉아 다람쥐 먹지 마라
다람쥐는 너와 사랑에 빠졌다
부엉아 다람쥐 먹지 마라
다람쥐는 겸손하고 인색해 보여도
다람쥐는 경건한 존재니라
부엉아 예의 바른 부엉아
착하지 우리 부엉 부엉이
꿈이 본다. 꿈이 운다
꿈은 꿈을 꾀다
겨울잠이 끝날 기미가 보인다
매일 매일 보인다
겨울썩이 터오니깐

9. 나

나는 궁금한게 딱 한가지
아니 두가지

“모기 목이 뭐지?”

그리고

10.

가려운 곳을 긁으면 덧난다, 혹은 새살 돋는다.

살구색은 살색이 아니다.

구청에 가서 물어본 적 있어요.

뭐 하는 분이냐구.

그니까. 당황해가지고

나한테 되물어봤지.

뭐 하는 분이냐고?

내가 그랬지. 아 내가 이동네 구청장이라고.

그러니까 그사람들이 차 이상한 눈으로 쳐다보더니

아 예예 저는 구청 직원입니다 하드라

설익은 살구는 술로 만들면

독이 되구요

살구청을 만들면

훌륭한 살충제 됩니다.

아물론 곤충목숨도 소중하지여
하지만 해충목숨보단 사람목숨이 더
소중할 수밖에 없는 것 아니겠습니까
두번째 궁금한 점
모기신은 누구지

11. The Imperial Space Government

The Imperial Space Government was the governing arm of the Imperial Space Army. Their specialty was making jam, but not sauce. Sweet, sticky, violet snot is how it tasted.

“TW: snow”, read the New New Times, which was the New New arm of the Imperial Space Government. It was very New; it was, therefore, stricken with affection for jam. A columnist, nose full of jam fresh and hot off the jammery, snorted, their face crumpled cricket hide. He was playing hide and seek with himself. It could have been fun, but it was very boring, because his nose was too full of jam. Unbeknownst to him, the jam often metamorphosed into electrically engineered amoeba. Amoeba love sugar. The article read:

« *Propositio XXXIII. Si aliquem imaginamur Laetitia afficere rem, quam amamus, Amore erga eum afficiemur. Si contra idem Laetitia affectum esse imaginetur, contristabitur.* »

Amoeba have some good points, sometimes, thought the barbarian. Smiling, she lowered the remote control. Took out the entroperiums (batteries), switched it over to her pine wood cone massager. The barbarian used she/her pronouns. She was a woman! A woman barbarian. What a concept!

“Home” was a strange concept to the barbarian, perhaps stranger than “woman barbarian” to a columnist controlled by electrically engineered amoeba. The barbarian kept telling them:

home is where the heart is. The heart, of course, is in Time. The columnist insisted, however, that time does not rhyme with jam.

“What rhymes with jam?” Asked the barbarian, patiently.

“Bar-bar-bar!” said the columnist.

“Very funny.” Said the barbarian.

“No, “bar” rhymes with “jam”.” The columnist tried to save face.

“Let me tell you what rhymes with jam.” Said the barbarian.

“What?”

“Am.”

“Okay?”

“America, I mean.”

“What’s that?”

“Oh, an ancient nation-state in the outskirts of the Fires.”

“Oh, what happened to them?”

“They let barbarians handle library security.”

“And?”

“The barbarians ate all the books, of course!”

“And?”

“Without the books, they could not study.”

“And without studying, yes, we inevitably fell into decline.”

A solemn silence.

“You still haven’t told me what rhymes with “jam”.”

“I think, I can make it work, “Time” rhymes with “jam”.”

“Once in a lifetime.”

The barbarian woman looked ten thousand years younger than she really was. Or: she looked ten thousand years older than she really was. This was alien business, of course. The barbarian woman was an alien woman, of course. How old is history? She could not hear the sound of her own voice because the wood pine cone massager was so loud, so loud her shoulders unclenched. It was a nice warm night alone for the barbarian, relaxing with the massager to her shoulder, after having taken a hot warm bath, sitting in front of hot frosted fire, eating flakey mealworms for a midnight snack. And no, she just wanted to be unbothered. Although being annoyed was nice. A little tickle. Not like a mosquito, not like a migraine, but a little tickle on her back. A puzzle to solve, a movie to watch, a fire to kindle. A sky to fold, a shiver to stop, a limit to unravel.

“int e = 3;” she started to type. It was technically incorrect, but “e” rhymed with “three”.

12. Vegetarians

Sixteen vegetarian owls are just going about the day.

Suddenly, a fish appears.

Owl 1: I’ve just about had enough of this rabbit food. I’m going for the fish.

Owl 2: No, no! Come, Buddha told us we have to be vegetarian.

Owl 3: Yeah! He said, even, that, uh, if we’re, uh, vegetarian, we’ll be, uh, Buddha, too, or, uh, not-Buddha.

Owl 2: Yeah yeah! Don’t you want to be Buddha? I mean, don’t you want to be not-Buddha? I mean, don’t you want to not be Buddha? I mean, don’t you want to not be not-Buddha?

Owl 1: Nonsense. I'm diving. I'm done with this. I can't anymore! A tomato's the meatiest thing I've had in a week. I can't do this anymore! An owl's gotta owl.

Owl 3: No---

Owl 1 swoops down, into the river. An eagle follows after Owl 1.

Eagle: Not so fast, Owl 1!

Eagle snatches Owl 1. A fist fight ensues. Owls have three fists; Eagles have seven. Three times seven is twenty-one. Twenty-one has three syllables. Therefore: Owl wins!

Eagle: No---

Owl 1: Thank God I chopped off a fist first thing yesterday!

Eagle: What do you want?

Owl 1: I shall train you. I shall train you to snatch that fish for me! Muhahaha!

Eagle: As you will, master.

Eagle sheds a single tear. In a remote noonday hillside up in the Fires, an atrociously designed, vexillologically speaking, red, white, and blue flag waves. An imperial police drone monitoring Owl activity swoops by, collects the eagle tear, and sets it off in the imperial spacetime logistical delivery channels. The tear materializes out of thin air and drops onto said flag. And again. And again. Rain. Thirteen owls fly into the channel. The police drone, harried and terrified, tries to close it, a tad too rapidly, and is sucked in. The channel stays open. The eagle is trained. The eagle catches the fish. The eagle is delivering the fish to Owl 1. The eagle was not trained enough; eagle drops fish.

12. America

“FISH RAIN IN NEW YORK CITY!” screamed the headline of the *New York Post*.

“FOR TEDRIOT’S DAY, AN EAGLE SHEDS A SINGLE TEAR...” yelled, with a slight grilled veneer of composure, the *New York Times*.

“Welcome to America!” said the tour guide leading a boatful of tourists around the Statue of Liberty through Ellis Island.

America in 2021 was in big trouble. Fires were everywhere. A strange virus had stricken, destroying the economy. Fireflies had been gone for ten years or more. People were saying: the American experiment has failed. The American empire is over. The mandate of heaven has fallen from America. And it was true. America had fallen.

US arose from the stupid, unmitigated, shimmering ruins of America’s dead white bones. A beautiful rose.

“First Firefly Spotted in Ten Years!”, said the front-page article of an ecology activism zine, which the tour guide distributed to the tourists. They gave him an odd look, shoved the zine in their jean pockets, and went about their wasteful days. But one of them did not.

“Ted?” said Melody, taking off her sunglasses.

Part IV. Ms. Mitra's H(M)ope

*Human beings suffer,
they torture one another,
they get hurt and get hard.
This poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted or endured.*

1. Bed

She is moping on her bed.

2. Bad

She is moping bad.

3. Lad

She sees the lad, again.

4. Mad

She gets mad!

5. Tad

Just a tad.

6. Glad

She is glad.

7. Because

When half the people get to 6th grade, at least, capitalism would vanish. But they kept dropping out at 2nd grade. Or they jumped to 9th grade straight from 1st grade. The former was called human, the latter alien. And 7th graders, weirdly, were called subhuman.

Anyway, good thing we are good hackers, right?

The lone 10th grader sat with their characteristic mysterious smile of which 2nd graders inferred smugness, 3rd graders resignation, 4th graders contemplation, 5th graders constipation, 6th graders ecstasy, 7th graders fury, 8th graders love, and 9th graders baby.

Some 1st graders were too busy killing elephants and going to the deepest reaches of hell for eternity eternized eterninate times. Other 1st graders were angels. Angelic hackers.

8. The aesthetic of capitalism

[This section intentionally left blank]

9. Anyway

Lueant said: "I can reveal it now."

"It's my last name."

I said: "I knew it."

Lueant was as tall as God.

10. Lueant Reinventio

The Reinventios were sleepy, short, beggin' beginners who honestly would rather be left alone. Not much depended on them. Nevertheless, I told them: *Repent! God is listening.*

They *hated* being humiliated. But they hated being surrounded by fire more, I think. Fire was encroaching in every which direction, and earthquakes were nigh. Yeah, it was an accident they had fucked with the Great Righteous Spirit one too-sleepy too-dreamy night and it wasn't their fault, that night wasn't. But substance is built, or not built, out of accumulations of accidentality.

And oh, they're in 3rd grade. They keep failing the annual exam. They do hate everyone in 4th grade, that's for sure. They're not nothing though! They keep thinking 4th grade is 2nd grade, and they keep thinking to be nothing is to be something. They would *hate* to be something. But they do not know how to be not nothing. Even though they are not nothing.

Nothing is not nothing to God. Everything is not nothing to God.

11. But

The fascist was dead.

12. What a mistake to have ever said *the*

“Oh hi, Melody,” said Ted, taking off his sun straw hat.

“Ted! What are you doing here? I’ve been looking for you everywhere forever.” Melody started to cry.

Ted tried to shrug. “You know, flash flood. Bam. Got swept away.”

“Same! Same! Oh my God, what a nightmare. I had this dream I was an owl!”

“Oh really? So did I.”

“And a squirrel.”

“And a bear.”

“Yes, and a bear too.”

“The swirly trinity.” Ted deadpanned.

“Sure,” said Melody, and her eyes laughed bright as firefly.

“Well, welcome to the US---”

“Ted, stop!” Melody said.

“Toil, mud, a grand-a-heap...” Ted switched.

“Stir, and stir,” Melody went along.

“O grease,”

“Emerge.” They smiled.

They prayed for new life, they prayed for new breath.

And, fam: you know, the *yogol* beverage!

13. The audience

The tourists on the boat were getting sick. They weren't wearing masks. They jumped off the boat, too sick to not bathe.

14. John 25

John was on his phone. Oslo scratched his head.

"Hold on, don't move so fast," said Jesus. "You've just gotten revived."

Oslo scratched his head. He wasn't sure if he still had Nuclear Vertigo, but he was feeling very vertigo-y. He felt strange. He had never felt this before. Was this anger? Was this awe? Was this sadness? Was this what it felt like to feel anything at all?

Oslo gasped. Could it be...

"A *dinosaur*???" Oslo shrieked.

"Oslo, wait!" Jesus said, in desperation.

"I've never seen a dinosaur in real life!" Oslo said. As it turns out, the Apple waistband was very unrealistic. His progression to Nuclear Vertigo III was swift and steady. But the dinosaur visions he was promised on Nuclear Vertigo III were so very boring. So he had decided to go, disguised as a space pirate, deep into the Waters of Tonekrhnoutoare, when he ran into his old friend Greenwater and pulled a prank on him.

Oslo scratched his head. There was a burn mark on the side of it, from all those years ago when batteries from the fire alarm fell on it. Oslo scratched his head. He wasn't sure why those batteries had to fall the way they did. He was just trying to turn off the fire alarm. Suddenly, he wanted to cry.

15. The imperial police drone

He was a drone enthusiast. He loved drones very much. Of course he did! How could droning drones not love drones? Absurdity is the negation of tautology.

There are many styles of negation. One style of negation is purely syntactic: the negation of OK is KO, for instance. Like so, Babak O'mama fell out of the sky and rained onto New York City. It was a beautiful day, he thought. A fitting day for his demise. He was wistful, almost glad. Several tears started to form from the innermost sanctum of his eyes. Thirteen owls swooped him up and brought them to their interdimensional nest.

Some paleontologists claim – the very oldest, eldest of them – that owls have been around since at least as long as the dinosaurs. All ornithologists know this from Ornithology 101.

16. City planning

Eviction. Verb, with an extra electron. A techne that makes genocide digestible. Do Americans think they are under genocide from their own parents?

“No,” said the witch. “It’s the amoeba who’s under genocide.”

“Bleach, you mean?” I said.

“Yes, bleach and chlorine and everything halogen,” said the witch.

“Chlorine: stomach fluid turned inside out,” I offered.

“Makes genocide digestible.” The witch ate frog chips.

Here is the difference: US think amoeba are under genocide from stomach fluid turned inside out. Americans think

their parents are stomach fluid turned inside out. Halo forced upon them: enough to want to kill the gen. All amoeba are engineered, electrically speaking. Eugenics? No, simply that there's no -cide. To kill amoeba: an occasion for cider. Especially when they eat brains!

"Who's an amoeba?" I asked.

"If you need to ask," the witch said, "you're the amoeba."

"I am not the amoeba!" I said. I was on the verge of tears.

"Oeba, oeba, oeba." said the witch, grinning. 'ma, ma, ma,' said the frog leg sticking out the left of her mouth.

I jotted down some notes. Em, Heinlein might be helpful. Or Heinz tomato ketchup. Or, eh, my mother's helper. Eating a hot dog, I dreamed wearily. There was too much ketchup, not enough sauce. The local saucery had been closed for far too long. Or so they claimed. I didn't know where all the sauce was going. A mystery for the ages.

Sage wind brought me back to attention.

"Ms. Mitra!" someone called out.

"What do you want?" Ms. Mitra said.

"I know. Do you?" said someone.

"Fuck off." she was in a bad, bad mood.

The sage wind grew stronger and greener.

17. The local saucery

Darryl returned, happy as sin, singing bangers, ring on his finger. It was his last name. His first name was Daisy, or Day, or Sy. He didn't go by Daisy too often. But it was one of his favorite flowers, and ergo, one of his favorite names. Thus Daisy loved himself.

His ice cream was known as sauce in the Waters of Sais.

Book III.

Laugh, shiver, twist, thou freeze. Where do babies go when the snow is close? Dreams, dreams tied to nihilating chocolate blossoms, the way off milky tears. Really now, drop the shivering enchantments. Cha'nt, cha'nt, cha'nt. Have not, eggs full of seed. After the flood. Hibiscus, manifest. Unite, bake revolution. Greatly press the flies on the sink. Flea, flee, flee to a mountain. I am sorry, my baby. I could not, my baby. I could not, could not. Baby, o go, o dream, do not be tied to a not.

Nature, come stand on the staircase. Man, come and flatten the steps. Dad: exist, lie more. Language is memory, miracle. That is on this specific precipice. They look, their eyes glazed over like knobs. Donut glazes: malfunctioning malevolent intentions. Grateful noises: thank you, thank you, forget me, forgo all intervening years. Danger! Danger! Danger!

Intervene in me. Intercourse: to pant, to cease. Cessation: the color of revelation. Californication: sus, it us. O go, a mountain; now is what I'm talm about. Nudge time. Laugh time. Stare like a fool. Put on some pants, precious dirt, leftover rice: hands of God sweating beads. The investigative reporter reporting on a farmer's taste of au pain. Labor day onion winning celebration. Pizza at home, in time.

Jump over this laugh. Ghosts! Ghosts, their shadows bodhisattva. Please: mow, my team, attain exhaustion. Get up, stand up. Leagues, leagues beyond. Yonder precipice. Monthly revolutionary force. Where are you?, where are you?. In the men's room. Respiration: restoration: re-scent. Cipher: a baldfaced fascist malevolent muse. I shall laugh: to reify sui generis. *Hyo-e-soo*: to retrieve. *Hyo*: filial piety. *Hyo*: an owl. *Hyo-sung*: the song of filial piety. *Soo*: a head.

"Who art you?" I asked Lueant.

"I art you." They replied.

Waiting old for news of spring, spring light does not come at last.
Not because there is no good spring light, but because it is not
the time.

When the season arrives, that it shall arrive without waiting, is
what nature is. Last night, after spring wind passed, ten
thousand trees knew time at once.