from THUNDERHEAD

. . .

I push my fingers into the crevices of volcanic rock send messages to a better future made of eights eight revolutions in misting exteriors (as in film) once upon a time I passed through rooms touched in prayer like a piano I wished to drop like rain into a pool ovoid moon harboring the lowest note so rude these were my efforts to stay alive amidst plague years of a different kind a kind of dreaming that is, being small smaller then than the branches that buoyed me, a tapestry of indeterminate asteroidal wandering I sometimes have conversations with the ghost of my love's love hold hands with a book little pulses shimmer through the room like a nervous system and I am reminded of parties, how we used to love scavenging the corners for a past life like decapods scavenging the body as it decomposes into ubiquity air fluctuates like cells travelling through a monastery kitchen where radishes ferment, reviving the wisdom of ancestors what picture of solitude can you offer up without stretching its membrane to a disaster of paleness I miss the black hole of adolescence that disappears like vision into a pupil, the kind of void that sings like bees in bells the antediluvian moan of quickly dying lava what harmonies, entwined like matted hair unwilling to despair I wander among stones find water see shapes of the eventual on the walls of closed eyes like looking out through the shell of a sunlit egg-

What's looking back at you from inside your cup?

echoes of delusion & terror? a small wet likeness, with scales that tell the future? it's easy to project your personal set of eels onto the dark

but this is Pisces,

reformed

sharp fingers grope toward us from the great obsidian pupil of Spring

Earth grieves inside our lungs

gray & questioning

drawn

alone

I stoke fires &

mourn

no more adolescent desires, no touch or tender moments strung like string beans at a fox's wedding

I cry inside my mask in the grocery aisle

make spontaneous puzzles out of simple acts of being, harbor shock

like broth

steaming in an earthen bowl this month is for Spring cold

darkness

like plums,

is for folding sheets in half light

often, I make tea & argue with chipped dishes

they seem to bend in my hands along the slow soapy pull of the planet's

longing

like light

slides around

then refracts, the optic disc, bearing messages from the burning ash

both of my brains

can smell-

Eating a handful of snow in the garden that goes down rock steps placed by rough hands into the ground along an invisible line, a fault a sudden collapse where bleeding hearts used to grow who is that screaming in the waterlogged wood of the fire, whose mouth is propagating froth, seething in the smolder of locust limbs? even piano keys bow in reverence to humidity, house a heavy boat that glides through northern nights, nights a kind of window we look out from into a bitchy world suffocation burgeon of flower, spore, virus car on fire alarm fills the sweet hot air hung like laundry (snow was a dream drifting down, like my skin, a sparkle of nightmare) in the sublime, I dig my way back into that decade when even the mice were sweeter hidden like gems in our folded clothes lifetime of basement tornado sirens then summer berries studding the edge of woods who knew we'd bury so much even the tastes can you imagine lifted from the tongue nestled in with bones in the garden, ex-voto bulbs, garden I lie down in to watch the house collapsing like an old body, water spots disembowel the ceiling, momma's porch caved in no appetite left for shadows

plutonic remembrance in lavender fugue what remains but the Holy Ghost? will you hold me now? now that I've remembered at least 3 things about the way we used to love snow? will you feel my heart and tell me if it's beating too far away from you?

> we were poor; we slept late; then wandered; forgot the way out; of ourselves

Beloved, you rock in Cassiopeia's chair in a moment lingering like plasma the buffalo know how a revolution moves through us seemingly endless cloud of conscious thought like candle smoke like how the bottom of a breath gurgles, after all these years, they say the affliction may never leave your body, beloved I am lighting candles for you on the mountain, & the Reaper is sitting in my lap curling his tail, & what is melting-it is everything, hot, descending the leg of a table rotating in space, a lie, a pack of them, claiming invincibility as Jupiter comes into view, there is nothing simple about the way the eye perceives a panorama of horror, the buffalo know, vast plains horripilate & the eye burns outThough the loosely bound pages of time seek to describe our distance, you are here

with me now

slung under the arm of the great stone giant who navigates fate

counting every step you're taken away from home

where heaps of fabric lie collecting fungi in the basement

home where you smoke a cigarette & hang your body out the upstairs window

listening to owls

& the drug dealer doing donuts on the lawn next door

in a red truck

like a spell against death

good lord

these greasy days

my mind in anthills

cymbals strike

I fold the taste of falling into into the batter

& though I approach the altar with hope & a desire to be loved

I receive only

smoke

burning oil paintings

& sympathy comes only from the leaves

8

| in my teacup | a vessel | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| | transpo | orting the unwritten syllabi of skeletons | |
| | | | |
| | & all along | | |
| | | | |
| the dark corridors of my year, | | | |
| I trace your name into the stone | | | |
| | | | |
| our blood leaps, uncounted | | | |
| | faces of fire | | |
| | | | |
| silhouettes shift like memories beyond panes of stained glass, | | | |
| | | | |
| the shattered fragments of blue and yellow I receive | | | |
| | though I hesita | ite | |
| | standing like a dark ghost | | |
| | in the doorway | | |
| of the study where | | | |
| | god | does his hazardous darning— | |
| | | | |

Yes to the notion of sleeping through live birth, no to the coward's trail of lighter fluid.

yes to a country of only children, no to eating grubworms & moss.

yes to spirit, no to god.

yes to fluttering like a ribbon of incandescence through saline eternities, no to turtle soup.

yes to paintings with more dismemberment, no to colonial pride.

no to bunkbeds, yes to ladders up trees near the abandonment well.

yes yes to eating fire but never say yes when I plead.

only yes when unintended shades of apricot bellow softly in a field of helium ringlets on the page,

only yes as we grope for our missing wings. no to abstract guilt.

yes, please cover my grave in peonies but rename them,

yes to dead grandmothers who are perfect because we never met them who will forever remember our faces,

yes, thunder. yes, cerebellum. yes, sorrow. yes, solace. yes, our remainder, but without us.

without what is gagged, without secret or sacrifice, without a key–

CLAIRE BOWMAN

Claire Bowman is the author of a chapbook titled *Dear Creatures* (Sutra Press, 2017). She holds an MFA from the Michener Center for Writers, and her work can be found in *Black Warrior Review*, *Narrative Magazine*, and *The Volta*, among other places. Claire works as the Senior Editor at Host Publications, where she also produces a literary podcast called *The Host Dispatch*. She moonlights as a tarot reader and teacher with Typewriter Tarot in Austin. Follow her on instagram @clairethepoet. https://www.instagram.com/clairethepoet/