

2020 ~ 2021 ruminations



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a haiku:

*forest fire smoke
air quality hazardous
breathe it in baby*

*Guilt is heavy. Guilt is horrid. Guilt drips —
it is sticky and weighted and leeches into the
microscopic crevices unperceived by you.
it stays dormant, growing rancid, until the stench
finally catches up to your nose
and it snares you in; fingernails digging into your
alabaster back bones,
flesh punctured, carmine blood streaming —
yet no matter how much you bleed,
it still does not satisfy, and instead,
increases its hold upon you.
it is always there,
lurking in the cold azure shadow
just outside your periphery;
and you are always beholden to it,
for it is helpless and small and infantile
and to go up against it would be to go up against
innocence.
the guilt keeps you innocent
and your innocence makes you untouchable,
inapplicable.
because:
how could someone who already feels so bad, do bad?*

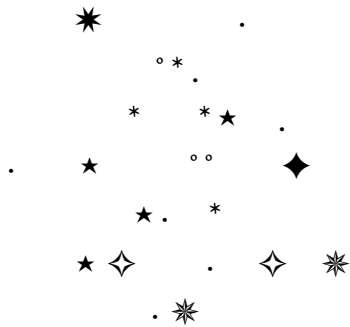




*back when the clouds were waves
and all were happy days
the wolf was kept at bay
when we composed stories and plays
leathery hands would animate
magic puppets of make-believe
make-believing
tales as real as a caidao's edge
making
safely, safety
believing
in a drawbridge back –
back when the clouds were waves*

*sound does not escape the minnesotan insulation
in-between the walls
wood paneling and lime shag
construct the artificial wilderness
a snowy mountain ride down,
slipping on ice tiling,
as i journey on the quest to wonderland.
white silence greets me when i arrive
and i eat the snow with chopsticks*





*the wolf and the dragon reach their limits
constantly;
battle-axes are thrown,
miasmatic gas released,
and the artificial wilderness trembles.*

*it reverberates up into the heavens,
but not even guan yin can save them.*

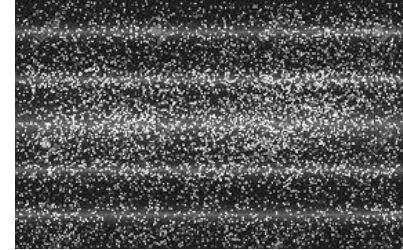
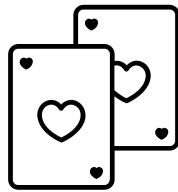
all she can do is plug her ears.

*The lumberjack strokes my horns and caresses my blue hide.
“You are what completes me,” he croons
“Without you, I would be nothing.”
I huff obediently, as my ancestors taught me to do, as my
previous owners had beat into me.
“Wow, I wish other oxen were like you. Instead, they’re all so
angry and entitled. They expect me to care for them and
pander to their needs, when that’s clearly oxen’s work. I just
wish all oxen came from where you’re from.”*



*Deep in a cave,
beyond a white picket fence,
once lied a fragile heart.
Determined to chase a dream,
it cultivates for a thousand years
and finally hardens to stone.*

*Ready to brave the world,
it implants in the body of a woman
working two factory jobs,
beating crookedly in her chest
when she passes out in the driveway,
lottery tickets in hand, last month's
shopping spree in the trunk:
her rewards for cultivating so good.*



*The man on screen has blonde hair
and reminds her of a reverie,
she thinks he's good.
She doesn't understand what he is saying
but instead, focuses on his posture:
He is upright and proud,
Charismatic
and she knows he's good.*

*He tells her that the place she is from
is bad
but she is still touched
that he acknowledges at all that place she is from
deep within the cave
that she herself had forgotten about
and had forgotten about for good.*

*but louder than the wolf or the dragon
is the aftermath –
deafening silence.
an erasure of what once was.
a jumping from one reality
to the next:
where the white picket fence
doesn't tilt
and the fresh mowed lawn
stays green
and that 2-story house
isn't the ugliest thing i've ever seen.*





*the waves rise and fall as the heart pumps:
crashing and rising
they create ephemeral digital peaks;
an uncertain horizon*



*December stings harsh wind on packaged face
Sweet yam in the oven
A candle lit desk lamp
A virtual homecoming in the dark
Deposit care into the bank for transfer
Holiday gifts for surname Zheng
A telephone*



*Spring emerges like that bts song
a fangirl in their audience
laptop screen alight, ceiling fan swinging
dust particles into the air
flying like smoked snow
second-hand song in my lungs
i want to scream, but cannot
because there are neighbors in the walls
and checkpoints in the hours
and updates in the ringtones
and i am so incredibly tired.*

*A new asian drama on that streaming service –
a service working 4 a service working body
owned by a lumberjack
he praises her and it keeps her small
pretty faces sell her a new dream
and she thinks of him*



*I held you in a dream
Soft petal
Rose artery
Eggshell cream texture
As you birthed me
Ba dum, ba dum
Hearts intertwined
No longer
As the cord was cut
And i became my own*





Your mistake when you call me their names
is: you do not see *me*.
Instead, a vague retention of my packaging
in your brain,
unbothered to examine further
into *me*.

Me who is separate
from those whose names
you've called me.

Me who has an aura,
an essence,
a personhood
absolutely bursting
with the peculiarity of
my own *me*.
See *me*.



And see *them*,
Deities as distinct as me.
Them –
Each, a theatre of nuance
so at capacity
with the matchless beauty
of *themselves* –
Too busy to be me.

See their ray, shine, and sparkle
to my twinkle
Hear their trill, vibrato, and arpeggio
to my tremolo
They are all as much their own me
As I am mine

We are all mutually incapable of
understudying each other.
How dare you
blaspheme so casually?
Trim off your eyelid
as an offering to our altar:
See our *me*.



