



# CHICKENHAWKS & GOLDILOCKS

GREY VILD

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*Author's note: These poems were written to a loved one who died at the beginning of 2016. While trans suicide is an epidemic, I found writing explicitly about this matter convolutes the real telling at hand. It is my hope that the poems here sketch just enough story to allow the reader to sink into this sometimes slippery work.*

## A prayer no one wants to

be, bellows the flesh as in a great water or wind. You are gentle about the temples when you want me back. When you're bored or some formless need that needs to shape my throbbing. (milk tether laps the way of no until the hunters in the woods come home) Now that you've won. Describe the many splendors of your empire. Use the voice no one will recognize. Leave us—throatless, sun-up. Spoils in the wake of. I was once seven bolts of silk that never touched your skin. But you smiled when you traced my name in your inventory & I unspooled, fled my tethers, reached so far into the sun no one could find me.



## **Because now I can't refuse you**

& because you have stopped dreaming. because you live now in the place of. because I owe you a river stone. because you filled the erasures that spill down my neck & the front of my shirt with lipstick, the kind not attached to lips. because the stains left me unspeakable. more than the disappearances. Why don't you bring some word of the others. Why can't you frighten the children into intelligence. Why do you wear the death I wanted for so long like an unfeathered mask, like the shimmering hides of precious jewels, like a glass veil cracked with smothered cries.

## **It's almost like we still lie to each other,**

but it's just me now. In your inventories, several light bulb jokes I wrote myself. In your inventories, it is too dark to read. In your inventories, I was nine granite columns, pulled up the Nile by slaves. I held fast, a sky overcast with crackling leather, polished in the reduction of another man's labor. to dust. I was the Technicolor contrast on the version of the story I can relate to. It is full of bullet holes & I would just like you to know that I had my little hopes once, too. & now. The least you can do is tell me, was it as satisfying as we imagined, to make every ounce of traitorous flesh finally pay for itself.

## **A terrible prayer wrings the knees to rags, rags to**

a terrible elevation. Makes the dead animals on the basement walls smile. Moves the hides of the walls, of each forced grin carcass of a wild tamed, of whole futures we still dream—if you chew the stems from my hands like the disfigurement of every three a.m. that passes for what will never rest now. I pour like water, in the form of a dress that unravels between us—

**Now that you live inside my head like  
a god I never wanted**

Let's build a ruins of the sky. Just to deface it.

Just to see our image in stone, crumble.

## **Dirt doll in a**

cathedral made of mouths. Spiderglassed past tonsils & each fastened likening. Let's make every hollow a carnal verge worth deeming. Hurt, where our yawning maul chandeliers breathe to echo, I've taken a vow like betrayal. Wanted to speak nothing, instead splintered inside each other's cries—the kind no one can hear.

## **We, finally**

capture the yoke that unlocks the cathedral. I'm not honey, I'm a gag in the. Carnal, carnival sun-drenched, scavenged throat of worship. What idols we placed there are not golden. What idols we placed there can only be flesh. What idols we placed there refuse to be flesh. Aren't the great Jonah-bellied rafters far too much like the scaffolding over the train I'm still outscreeching, across & cross the river, hoarse as the fastly pinkening expanse you can't hear now, but feel, like a soundless thunder rumbling a dry sky.

## **The yoke that unlocks**

& pours her from you. Fastly undermines the last pause in the thunder. Soon, the table is overflowing. Soon, my shoes & the filthy river, displaces me so I. displace it back. So I, throw myself down flight upon flight, break clay tiles over my thighs, lash the (cackling, hush of) humiliation to the real need that gets eureka'd like an ocean.

## **They refuse to be flesh**

Cross the river & my chest, four-pointed star that will not regenerate. It means nothing, it means less than. What god have you found worth believing, you: who believed. & where our hungers met—fields within fields burn, houses within houses. The paint at the windows curls until a landscape, collapsed. My jaw, singed, stark at the chorus & I wouldn't let them scrub the char away. This is my face now. Chalk screeching down a bald board, mouth melded to mouth melded to—

& you should have to look at it, but you don't.



## **& I had to use a hacksaw to unclench my fist**

& the rain streaked the ash down my neck until I was so stark, so far from recognition, I could only be beautiful, (finally.) until I was lit up like a cockeyed skyline & if I told you the rain doesn't get inside anymore I would be lying but the truth is we enjoyed lying to each other very much but the truth is I won't let anyone pour you from me & I ate the pale bells stem first, to swallow the silence we peeled back from the idols that had us nearly convinced they are not flesh, from the idols that don't get to refuse but they do, baby, that's all that they do.

## The wire-like toothless blade

any addiction favors, honed a tongue singular as any such debasement. Such as, we fled my father swearing at the tv, the howling all around us made certain people stop touching us at a young age certain people start at a younger & all along we thought the sky was supposed to be that green. Such as, I gargle yellow number six until I'm foaming at the first memory I have in a fit of drag & if you'll just be happy now I swear to the god that doesn't live inside my head, I would pull you back here, through the night so barbed with vision as the day, through the day unseen as the howling no one hears or, we lie & lie & lie, pulling green from the roots, all the way back to—

just to do it myself.

## **Because I know you'll hate this story**

There was a woman who found the perforations you etched into my skull. When she was done with the removal, the counters were littered with river stones. Each one you stole from my pockets like days. Each one fit to my palm, was also made to fit yours. I got them back, somehow. & so, I want to remember your kindnesses. I only remember the thunder claspings as we fell. So short a distance, you wouldn't think—

## She makes me out of stone & I

Frighten the children into rubble. Serve us tea brewed from their gravel dust. On a throne of debris, we have eschewed every sign that read *tear here* & then, you. do it anyway. The idols we leashed to the cracked howl of the cathedral are flesh-like trophies I pour at your feet. What thud, dud, clunks from me: filth, in the wake of. Ripples, [like origins] granite-like & spine. But the columns, we're poured concrete. & the walls & the places where we touched, all along, a terrible sound that won't shut up.

## **She makes me out of stone &**

sunken & erected, statued & defaced, Sisyphean & reduced to. Skipped & sunk, again. Marked & marked with. She makes me out of stone & my insides gag on chipped grins. She makes me out of stone & I feast on drought, wring loose a wave of rapid erosion & she makes me out. of the failure to know who or what feeds me, as green water curls what neither breathes nor refuses, now. & shit pocks my eyes or a carriage of stone can never be filled with—who knew & talked to stones? Some days it's like I got you back from the riverbed. Or the moment of dream (purer than dream what is purer than dream only death no you idiot it is love)

when they pulled out the knives you had given them.

## **She makes me out of stone & I**

sicken the edges. You won't believe me. Go to her kitchen. Pillage her counters. Throw every chunk of river you find there through whatever is left of you.

## **Just like the god I never**

& did you know they're poison? Those finely stemmed bells that don't form to fit the slur of your most desperate acts or the awe that splashes in the wake of, anymore. Even in sleep, she cradles her head at crooked angles. Sometimes I lift her wrist, just to watch it fall. I do this until she opens her eyes, assures me that it's over.

**Or that lily of the valley song I didn't have the heart  
to ask the woman with your mouth**

at your funeral. Tell me she's someone else's home. Tell me she sleeps through the night. Tell me you leave her alone. Tell me, the green rollin' hills of West Virginia... Tell me the threads we pull from each other don't leave us gutted. Tell me the locks you braid fast to my wrist all night disappear under sun. Tell me you take them with you. Tell me wherever you're going there's a rusty old Buick, buckets of rain. Tell me what could have been. Tell me I'm not on for size. Tell me I need her as little as I need you.



## **Almost, human**

We leapt at the waves, were knocked to shore again & again. Almost anyone will use you, if you love them enough. We were like a certain failure to develop, abandoned cul-de-sacs, a ruinous concrete where kids knocked out each other's teeth. Don't get me started on the creek that ran mostly dry, the horror that passes for the precious child. Pass from one life to another, one lover to. It's all replaceable. We're on that next level shit where no one can touch us.

## Since you hate me anyway

the dry socket of the storm corrodes like perforations that measure our limbs against each other. Stunted cumulus, make a kindling of shins. Ribs sharpen ribs, their shiny caws alight behind us so you see me in pieces & I see you suspend the debris inside my head the way the clouds refuse to move & the mountains put us so close.

## **Down in the valley a-prayin'**

the simpleton stares at the backs of his hands, he's cut them to stems. Tiny hairs crawl, twitch like the legs of smashed ants, send red threads pulsing through the dirt, rooting like a perfect failure to attach. Fish-eye pale, five-pointed refusal. Never again will they write you reasons to live, you can't read in the dark.

## **We stand at the rain at the windows**

like caged animals. We do not let it touch us. We think we are control. Paint the room white with our vomit, blurs where we won't say. Trade tongues & scab the perforations. Be placebo too, when they want it. Finally, admit. Call in sick for the last examination. Fail with flying definition, precision in the face of, their precious failure. whose tenderness eclipsed our only names.

## **Ain't nothin' not**

animals, at the rain at the window. My chest is the cage, metal bars we are soft mouths against. Inside, a small clatter. You make that little jump that lasts forever. again &. It's three am, the rope so taut the rain will never end. Inside a latticework of bars & skin, I think I am a man.

Finally. So much rage, nothing will ever still.

## Measure the length of

one last. So brave, we have all but disappeared. We are on, for size. To be found inferior, in any dimension. This one is all the reasons you can't read in the dark. It pours salt from fine linen like the fakest Christmas jangles your hair &. lusting for rain, when a life can't be wanted, death can. It is something. It is increasingly, the texture of your curls. It is still, your gold hammers' dizzyings pelt the insides of my skull in patches. The crashing salt polished to a thinness that melts the tongue.

## **Keep me & never let me go**

It is something, not nothing. I've taken to statistics & so, keep being made to inventory your name. A parchment of lips & unspoken. I wanted to be relieved. Instead, the usual endless shame. It is Midas-like & no longer comforting. Even the contortions that accompany, where otherwise shapeless. They are not nothing. I whisper to the stone sinking in the pit of every track to cross me, every thistley undergrowth, every lonely tie tripped down. & you are there, our silences full as ever.

## The sin of despair

like children, playing in what seems to be instead of what is—it takes away the sin of the world. Like pieces of war in the silverware drawer & all your chickenhawks & goldilocks, perforations pour from you, lit up remnants of torn creatures that can't regenerate what my grip erased, tried to fill it in with lipstick & dirty highlighter pens. I am only as filthy as you'll let me. & the ground, collapsed my knees, wrings the flight from a cockeyed cumulus. Who could be this earthbound & hollow? You pick from me, I'm nothing but mites—  
mutter us, a cumulus

in a voice we've only begun to recognize.



## Notes

The line “dirt doll in a dirt scar” is lovingly stolen from the poem “Lucy loves her rust—” by Claudia Cortese.

“Down in the valley a-prayin” borrows from the traditional song, “Bright Morning Stars.”

All the “reasons you can’t read in the dark” reference Corey Zeller’s *Man vs. Sky*.

“Keep me and never let me go” is another lyric from Hazel Dickens’ “The green rolling hills of West Virginia.”

The phrase “chickenhawks and goldilocks” is from a song by Geo Wyeth.

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