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Apropos of Nothing

Self-Portrait With Magic

A coal-scrawled circle on fire-parched soil.

No expectations of plasma, lightning networks, incandescent nerve centers.

Can I redact fault?

Underworld IM: *we r nvr full / we luv yr ppl / u say glbl wrmng / we say cleen inergee*

Raindrops fizzle-flash into mist.

Yes Mr. Tux-tails, yes Mr. Cumberbund, please keep your rabbit legions at bay.

I will aim my flicked-wrist resurrection myths elsewhere.

Once frozen, a gangrened hand is a heliotrope.

Until then, the circle—

how many shapes does your handkerchief take?

Self-Portrait With Apology, The Insurance Salesman

As with any commodity, oxygen is worthless until supply is threatened. Did you know your respiratory system is like a ductwork system that loses pressure intermittently? There are many reasons why, but my guess is your tongue. It's a terrorist sleeper cell. It's Helen of Troy desperate for the Grecian navy. The point remains: you hemorrhage breath without a second thought. God forbid the rapture is postponed. The free market favors first entrants, and the elderly have attempted life long before you. Stems cells and bionics mean they'll live forever. 100% of the earth will be a seething blue mass. At this time, your tongue will become an unwelcome bouquet. Smashing it into the pavement will accomplish nothing. No one will look. Why lose sleep—sign this contract. You won't have to worry if she hesitates for a second, if your tongue sticks between your front teeth. Apropos of nothing, you'll always be able to say *thank you for accepting me*.

Self-Portrait With Nuclear Winter

Two men aren't kissing, and McDonald's is open for breakfast—you cannot die under these circumstances. Yet your fingers struggle to escape, stretching your hand into a quiver. I'm not a thief, but I downloaded a thief's muscle memory. This explains the shallow wound splitting your chest diagonally in two. You struggle as if chewing ice, as if your entire jaw is numb. Blood is a faint stitch just now visible in the poor light. I crouch beside you, facing the open window. The morning sky is wet with fresh color. If you let it dry, you will be no different than me.

Self-Portrait With The Faucet Running

I'm infatuated with the counterclockwise swirl
in my bathtub. Until my stomach, pregnant
with another bathtub of water I've swallowed,
bursts. My wife doesn't like foul smells.
She throws me into a dumpster behind the market,
which is then dumped into the adjacent river.
Small animals like beavers and cranes sojourn
on me. Fish don't quite understand the attraction.
Please ignore me, Mr. Cannibal. Surely you hollow
out skin canoes every day. My sodden flesh
shouldn't tempt you. Judging by the smoke,
fire fixes everything but rain. Sweet God
of Proper Burial! Mr. Cannibal has different ideas.
He pries open my chest, cleans the cavity until my bones
shine anew. His hands are surprisingly smooth—
must be the regular application of blood. He consults
with the cannibal women. I'm not sexist—
what does it matter now?—so the flesh
between my neatly aligned ribs must be a prime
garden plot. Maybe my organs resemble unripe
cantaloupes or peaches. Now they just stare.
Nothing will grow like this. A watched pot never boils.
It's true. Hey! Hey! Don't just leave! I exercised
every morning of my life just for this? My eyes
are open. My eyes are blue. Mr. Cannibal,
before you leave, please notice my eyes are the same
circumference as the stick in your right hand.

Self-Portrait With Future Daughter, Replete With Excuses

1.

A sad arsonist breaks his matchsticks in two.

A sad arsonist rubs his box smooth.

A sad arsonist burns his hands, once white and soft like magician's gloves.

A sad arsonist watches a New Year's fireworks display.

A sad arsonist worries his flame will be a loud explosion with no afterglow.

2.

My house is infested with stairs and shadows. Stairs are easy: lop off the second floor, make staccato music with a sledgehammer, move into the nearby ranch community. But shadows. I imagine shadows slipping beneath your fleshy feet like cushions as you totter forward. Shadows will hope your entire face turns into an eyelid. Shadows will rush into your open mouth, slack with a toothless smile. You can't tell me what is growing on the dark end of your tongue.

3.

I manage a plush, red lounge.

You drop in, light a cigarette.

You don't buy a drink. You leave without saying hello.

Even the soft piano melodies smell like smoke.

I blame you for everything.