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IMITATION ANIMALS

## WHITE PEACOCK

What might lift these heavy hearts?

There's a war over there, a thousand popping drums,  
and they're shearing off women's hair by the shellful. Let's look  
for work to do. I will hold the neighbor's child  
to my own breast, and you will gather bread and salt  
from our own store. We'll walk into the morning  
with a basket to pass. Let's petition the grandest door in town  
opening to a garden; their white peacock pushes through the tender greens,  
flips its stainless mantle shyly, and is gone.  
We must carry on giving, but the whole day long  
we are asking. You compare it to the moon;  
I compare it to stars.

## KARNER BLUE BUTTERFLY HUNT

Some narcotic wavelength breeds  
backward through the pigment. Seconds,

then the siege. They struggle  
to disedge their shine against

the grass, and thrash to powder.  
Smearing hands with this must shear

the common from the hours—  
otherwise, it would be greed.

Last night, I dreamt of passage:  
a rough midwife in a land

of barren women. No one  
spoke of what I was, or scorned

my forceless, distant gifts. Coarse  
cotton draped our dull commerce

and we halved a dish of figs.

## MOUSE THROUGH SNAKE

Its shriek pixelates, rings compound, as shock waves in the blood.

Her head spreads out from the crown,  
leaving only the thick sockets solid.  
Increase. Her lower jaw detaches

then divides, no longer half of a hinge  
but a jagged pair of claws  
that paw and pulse the other body  
through the stretch.

The task is to cup the bleeding bead, to draw it,  
to compress it into the string it travels on.

First segment grasps the tail.

Second, hindquarters.

Third, abdomen—

    little oblong heart beats once, knifewise—  
and she feels it. It fixes her

for many hours, masked in brush,  
hanging and re-hanging her jaw to divert her mind  
from the smoldering,  
the bulb she's burning.

## GREAT WHITE

In the highest of three stacked attics, I find a paperback *Jaws* with a safety pin through its first twenty pages, sealing off a scene where a man slides his hands up a woman's

sandy suit and she, a little drunk, leads him down to screw in the water. I replace the pin and return to help my grandmother sew, cutting squares of sky blue

crepe for throw pillows. *Careful—there's not much left. That's from your mother's bridesmaids' dresses, and this here is the one I wore.* I want to cut up the white dress too,

for the lace. *No, we have to keep it nice—the same answer for why I cannot wind her clocks or make tiny pies from green potatoes and her elegant*

dough. But later that evening, she lets me strip to undershirt and panties while she lifts her own daughter's bridal gown from its shallow box.

Mother's satin pump sits prim as a pearl-handled gravy boat. I can't crush my heel in. The skirts curl away from my ankles. My shoulders strain against

the ancient stitching. In all the pictures, my mother shoots up through this gown like a stalk, filling it out like wet white corn, a glossy inner glove of sweat. *Stand up*

*straight. Let me get my camera.* But I want to carry violets. But I bleed. But I put my toe clean through the skirt hem. In my grandmother's version of things, the story begins

when the monster tears through the first limb, starts a fire in the crabapple orchard and returns with arms full of brambles, panties stuck with grass, no shoes.

THE EXACT DUPLICATE OF THE TWIN SISTER OF A JACKASS

Squat of brains.  
Inopportune concomitant.  
A holiday half-livered  
in the vineyard.  
Unwell expanse, fatty  
tracts of land.  
Raw nest. Yes, you are  
something more—or  
less. Flaccid length  
of gut stretched wide  
and stamped by lot  
into a face. Clipped  
and trimmed. Wreathed  
with perfumed garland  
on the doppelgängers' chain gang.  
Barter for split passage, then.  
Barter for the splicing of the soul.  
Irredeemable veil. Bloody pants  
and ungovernable contingency.  
Unclearable unhearable conscience,

I drag my boat  
through you.