

Kat Dixon

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Kississippi

dear smallest world

There are a dozen ways  
to lay without touching –

A wasp comes next, crawling  
on his ego, and the sound becomes  
the dream where you've lost your teeth.

The wind chimes are mad for it:

I have left you beneath  
the honey light, mute  
or very small.

**\*\* previously appeared in A Handful of Stones**

dear house bird

Rib by rib, M. reminds me that I am not at all unlike  
his sister, who leaves open-ended sentences on the undersides  
of tablecloths and hopes,  
someday, to marry.

A little-death, with the hiccups, is interwoven in the picnic  
basket, he says. He says that people move to Indianapolis  
to have their fingers surgically laced through someone else's fingers.

These, he says, are outside figures: which faces to read as a stop watch,  
what to collect when found on the ground.

He tells me that I am too quickly tired of natural disasters,  
that I may one day finish swallowing the whale.

dear bonelessness

Your longest finger strikes a sniffing point –  
when numbers are uneven, we call them odd; here my feet  
are beneath a table and I  
can worry what you'll call me when you see  
that I cannot be divided  
by myself.        Here are reasons  
for laughing : listeners call it a good match,  
matches that are manufactured to burn.  
To burn,        we've sat with our feet touching  
while insects drowned in the deep end.

dear alligators and what you have eaten

a. In our color-coded sleep-rooms, subway systems came unbraided  
: a failure in speaking each intended punctuation.

b. Rochester did not recognize his prophetic cavities: a lion! or  
something capable of swallowing a telephone booth.

In the nature of reform, we received an electric lemon

centerpiece, unwrapped safety pins, a golden  
assurance of *all grievances delayed at the unveiling of a cherry  
pie, of a graham cracker regime.*

Mother dressed in egg cartons to receive him, perfumed by volcanic  
soil and the perspiration of forget-me-nots left uprooted on the driveway.

c. Six years we've spent in signatures and too preoccupied to rinse with vinegar.  
We've called fictitious what we will not own,

a house, an irreconcilable handshake  
- - slanted digits inking the palms of those  
hand-sewn hiding places, something like

elk skin (now known as a matter of mattering).

d. With my forehead against this comfortable transgression, I fill the handprints  
of your ribcage with a left-open manuscript, a now unfiltered waltz for a foxhole  
pin-up, for the disjointed melody beneath your appendix, incoming bomb shelter,

a call,  
a call,  
*a call.*

x, marks for spotted owls

There are things to come back  
to later, two women here, and a trick  
to counting

in straight lines. Groupings of three were unintentional: we've been born innumerable  
times in fields of clover, heads still in place. What looks accidental now takes the shape of three  
unmatched socks in the lower drawers of your set-loose murder-tongue,

loose-set tongue--

murder: lists and lists of slipping into Cherokee Roses. A joint  
decision  
to allow them to finger-walk up the walls  
to allow them to sleep with all the lights on.

Two women here, but only one knows how to sew and remove stitches. Never mind my isotope.  
One calls them lie patches; not lovely, no *coming home means ice-cream*; both keep stalks of  
yellow yellow radish pink green peas. Together we have

wrung out all sad pictographs,

just the way we were taught, while we were  
mentioning forever tied into a sweaty bandana.  
Haven't I told you that you remind me of a  
somersault?

We've had quite enough of your mimicry, quite enough of your laughing gas.

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