drip, drip

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So this is the forest.
—Alice Notley
Medicatrix Naturae

I am speaking to you from the deep well
From the throat place

From the bottom of the drum
Behind the drum skin animal skin
Through the skin
A dark ness
Lilac thatch

Syringe, Syringa
The plunge pull push

The drawer of the dead is open
I am alive now You’ve made me
live

I saw the bag of tricks
And I laughed
the language of vines
The Sound of Oxygen

the patient is a pleasant female with-
take a deep breath and-
meds should start working in-

how graceful the gliding needle, how fluid the flowing blood, how rubbered
the tourniquet, how full the filling tubes, how blue the blooming bruise, how cotton
the staunching gauze, deftly the phlebotomist pulls out the butterfly, how dull
her eyes when she says you're all done.

dust motes in the sun.
the sun.

we believe the patient underreports her symp-

my husband: I need your body here. I need your legs heavy on me. your nipple
in my mouth like a soft, spoiling strawberry.

night sweats. chills.

fetal in bed. white the walls. white cell. this hospital. oxygen mist. glue of tape and tubes.

jellyfish. rot fog. drip. drip.

mushroom damp skin. morning nurse smells like peaches.

my baby girl: I need to leave.

my baby girl: look up. same stars.

my baby girl: remember the macaw? Fire. talons and plumage.
my hospital room stinks. is it me. is it coming from me. i smell myself compulsively. ask my mother
to smell me. mother tell me do i smell. certain bacteria can do that, you know, and it doesn’t matter
how hard you scrub it comes from inside your body foul potpourri. i scrub my skin till hot and raw
but the source of the smell is the room itself because when i walk the hallways it leaves. mother
smell me. mother are you sure. a nurse calls for maintenance men who are not the body bag men. an
animal has died and is decomposing in the ceiling above my head. rat or possum i’m not told. dark
carcass decomposing in the ceiling above my head. animal is removed. I am moved to another room.
everything is clean now.

Stench
Dahkter

the doctor’s march
doctors march the halls

wear masks of albatross

worms and paper confettis
fall from mouths

lab coats heavy
with whiteness

what is the name of that material
canvas linen cotton

how do they remain
so clean

some don’t bother
with antique attire

doctor in his pink cashmere sweater
doctor in her pencil skirt
Patinet

Each sickness, its own language.

Which countries have you visited?
Tell me the names of the places you’ve been.

Let’s do flash cards.
Fellow. Resident. Rounds.
Grand rounds.

This is the picc line:
peripherally inserted central catheter.
A portocath is called a port.
Which makes the body a sea. See:
different ways to enter the body.

Pee see ay: patient controlled analgesia.

I couldn’t type patient: I typed patinet.
I couldn’t type control: I typed conrol, cotrol.

Cobra a forked-tongue coverage.
Do you have insurance.
What kind of insurance do you have.

Insurance: ha. ha. ha. ha. ha. ha.
Horse, Shoe, Crab

a habitat contains one million gram negative bacteria

flange and hinge clotting phenomena

but we’re nowhere closer to knowing even though we looked at maps today

the rib cage creaks open so you rest in your resting- rest on a bench maybe you listen to the sea

the birdcage is wide open but bird doesn’t notice

nurse opens glass vials lake smooth paint smooth

no never been but saw it on a map time erases plays a fading ditty “day by day”

flicks the syringe ticks away air bubbles
such an accomplished sound
a needle enters

violin through the windows
pink dab in the white
Patinet II

Patient told to be patient. Patient hanging on, side of a mountain, sky above, sky below, skin on the skin of a mountain side, which is crag which is rough, “I know it’s rough just hang on,” patient as pendulum, swinging, swung, back and forth.
Patient told to be patient. The cure is coming! Preliminary studies look promising! If I can only hang on while the scientists, doctors, nurses, fundraisers, investors, and researchers do what they do. I decide to make a mosaic, to focus my patience, stone by stone, piece by piece, to adjective my noun self. I am not a patient, I am being patient. Alchemy, transformation: a label of Patient from identity into temporary state. I am being patient now, I will not always be [a] patient. Can I cure myself with pliable grammar?
Cure, A Study

Cure, as definition: to free from disease, to take care of, to guide spiritually, to preserve, to harden.

Cure, as rejection: accept what is, radically. Radical acceptance as complete immersion. A mikvah. Complete immersion into a body of water. Into body of life. Into body.

The Island Game

The main thing to know about playing the Island Game is that there are always a lot of storms and you hold onto trees: branch, root, trunk: for dear life. No one can save you but you. Yet you will still and nevertheless spend a lot of time yelling into the wind with plans for salvation because you love the people you are playing with and you want to help them/be helped by them. PASS ME THE BRANCH HERE TAKE THE BRANCH GRAB THIS HOLD TIGHT HOLD ON TO THIS BRANCH HOLD ON HOLD ON HOLD ON I’M HOLDING ON GOT IT YOU GOT IT I’M HOLDING ON YOU’RE FINE YOU’RE OK WE’RE SAFE THIS TIME. Or, I FOUND A MANGO TREE. Every uttered word is essential and of supreme immediate importance when you’re playing the Island Game; there are no superfluous verbalizations and so, frequently, the volume of voices is elevated. Sometimes there are quiet moments after the latest emergency has passed (a brief purgatory unconsciously yet somehow always unanimously agreed upon by the players, signaled by the catching of breath and the lengthening of time between shouts) at which point you can lay down in the grass or lean against a tree to listen to silence or the water in your head lapping and be grateful for having had the gumption and wherewithal to survive another natural disaster. The only other states of being in the Island Game other than “storm” or “rest” are “bracing for” or “repairing from”: sweep the palm fronds, count the bodies. It’s good to use these fleeting moments for rest or feeling the cool green of a banana leaf against your cheek. Rest is crucial and undervalued. The coolness of a leaf lasts for years, long after everyone has gone to play another game.
Notes Toward A Theory of Survival

for example, nightjars lay eggs directly on the ground

listen to whispers
old lady neighbor going mad daily
silence from our windows

or piano or violin
or morphine

goatsuckers take milk
from wherever it can be found

always in the kitchen
a meritocracy

mother, who will get the liver
who will get the bones

bones are worth something
bowl of broth something to gnaw on

bits tucked in linen handkerchiefs

for later when is later? Later
is hunger is always is now
Song Composed of Meat and Fruit

My only sunshine,
last night I walked through

our dark rooms
spraying lemon scented air freshener.

I need you to know my air is clean.
And I dwell in pleasant smelling environs.

But I am a butcher’s apprentice.
I am ground meat.

Fruit and blooms have strategies for spreading:
now is the time to see the body

as an amassment of tissue paper flowers.
Now is the time to love how colorful

and flammable we are.
Alchemical

An infestation of fog
at the base of the lung tree
indicated by the fluttering
of fish in the kneecap cup
and a reported preference
for eucalyptus, honey.
Patient emits disrupting
scent of ripe fruit.
Breath smells sweet and rotting.
Patient claims room air
is no longer sufficient.

:There is a thick file on my body.
I cannot elude the doktor but I rewrite
all bodily decrees
in egg white and lampblack,
distill medicinal essences
in an alembic, proper vessel
for gathering smoke, bloom.
Hosanna

Save, we pray.  
Save me.  
Maybe mommy.  
Maybe bee stings  
or royal jelly.  
Maybe infatuation:  
hope in high heels,  
a wax, flimsy underneath.  
Maybe hamster ovary cells.  
Maybe machinery.  
Maybe exercise.  
Maybe sex and pheromones  
afterward floating  
like dust motes.  
Maybe atonement,  
sorry heart, sorry body  
swinging a chicken  
around the head.  
Maybe more fat, less fat,  
green juice, juice cleanse,  
gluten free, meat free,  
dairy free, sugar free.  
Honey. Herbs.  
Maybe the words  
of the turbaned taxi driver  
speeding me along the 280:  
pray to Allah, beg forgiveness  
for sins. Maybe little pink pills.  
Maybe Om Nama Shivaya  
in a strip mall yoga studio.  
Maybe my child’s hands  
digging in dirt,  
watching the rows
of her todays, tomorrows.
Maybe Oprah.
Maybe rage.
A better haircut.
Another cupcake.
Maybe a weekend at the beach:
kneeling to the sun
and kneeling
and kneeling
and kneeling.
Maybe the bubble muscled men
in black tank tops
at the corner
cupping flowers in their hands.
Maybe flowers.
Fields of them.
Yarrow, chicory, blue vervain.
Common Names for Vervain

Enchanter’s Plant
Herb of the Cross
Devil’s Machine
Bastard Balm
Juno’s Tears
Pigeonweed
Simpler’s Joy
Herb of Grace
Herb of Prophecy
Wild Hyssop
Iron Weed
Prescription

Hang a chunk
of lion’s hide
tufted with hair
from the neck
of the ailing baby.

Carry a child
with breathing difficulties
through a flock of sheep
at dawn as they leave the fold
to enter the field.

A woman who wants
love must balance
a wasp’s nest
on her head.

A woman who wants
to dream of lovers must tuck
three barleycorn
beneath her pillow.

The barbaric angelic insomniac
scrubs bridges at night
and for the banshees
knits wool socks.
Shiver, Fever

A heat I cannot leave.

A fog.

Puffed wheat in the stuft chest throat.

First sip of water in the morning.

The gift of impulse roses.

Slamming sun.

“Rock your body, girl”

“Preserve us, lord/from hair and mud and flesh.”

Owl in the corner of my dreams.
Night Chant

Weep me the need for tears.
Pray strange, breathe ill.
God dialogue in the half-burned light.
Expel the foreign from foreigner.
Thick smoke sigh.
Climb into forest.
Passion haste up to the hole.
A longer song between prayers and prayers.
Madman wax.
Flowed eyes escape.
Waiting for days not long coming.
Devote to night.
Blossom betrothals.
Atmosphere of fear.
Wildfire revived.
Street, helmet, emblem.
On the seventh day.
Connections to salt and star.
Of what then did you die.
Barbed republic.
Hygiene machinery.
Moments stoke an eye-laden end.
Red illusion.
Sunshine unheeding.
Gather dusk pale.
Premonition afternoon.
Shadows awoke.
Expelled rest.
Journey throat choked lips.
Automatic infinite.
Germ alive.
Vein, limbs, brain.
Phylacteries and hurry.
Value window.
Littered dreams.
Settled wood lit weariness.
Night night pass, stars sparks.
Devoured fire.
Absent rest.
Whistle split grind.
Lucky blossoming countryside.
Thirst constraint.
Panic madame pale.
Withered cornfield.
 Mercy pressed darkness.
Spot in space.
Dumb stench.
Fetch. Watch.
Barometer god.
Odor floating doors.
Out wagon.
Air flesh.
Patinet IV

Substrate, the base on which an organism lives, substratum, a layer of something under another layer, my mosaic substrate a large rectangular backerboard, so large I know it will take years to cover. I cover it with stone, smalti, millefiori a thousand flowers, bottle caps, coins, a tooth, sand, beads, bullet casings, drill bits. I cover and cover and cover it but it is never covered enough.
Medical Questionnaire

Do you have enough oxygen?
Do you have enough breath?
Do you feel your breadth diminish?
Do you know sex is inspiration? Expiration?
(Heavy breathing, little death, yes god yes)
Do you seek pharmacy in the speckled
green leaves of pulmonaria officinalis?
Do you believe in the Doctrine of Signature?
Do you believe in the doctrine of rotting wood?
Do you know a bite of soft bread will salve a cough?
Do you bareback the diving bell?
Do you watch the clock?
Will you pay for air when it begins to run out?
Will you strap yourself to a tank?
Do you hunt eucalyptus and mint?
Do you go to the coast?
Do you sit on the beach to watch the ocean move?
To borrow the water’s size?
Do you visit the redwoods?
Do you say their name like a friend?
Do you think about it, all this breath-taking?
Pigmentation, Saturation, Intensity, Hue

gather green
cscarab beetle’s glint
emerald and peridot
basil leaf and basil scent
love green
and your green death
green lake
green lake bottom
lungs clogged with flowers
kelp and petal
cough stem cough stamen
cough anther and filament
cut the grasses
it’s been so long since fern
beautiful that paisley
sound of quiet
amoebic mystery
and there you are
swimming in the thick of it
in the green lake, mud cold
and suctioning
body sucked down tired
to the end to
the school of sunfish
flickering against skin
What Runs

the tree wrote a memo
I found on its skin

is skin the right
word for this scaling?
bark is more exact
but I swear
I saw folds and ridges and hair

I’m telling you what runs
hooves juice sap blood
this world is dripping wet
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