

II.
Separation is for the best, for the reason of every kind of health. But still I have this persistent, low-grade, low-wave, scratchy thing: the ache of being without you. We shouldn't have, but we allowed the kiss eight days ago. Make it nine. Ten. A thousand. I'm losing track of it all, except the last time I saw you. When I did it, my brain went very small. I noticed my fingernail on the honeyed edge of the bar, and the wedge of Hey, Arnold!-shirt showing between the bartender's striped cardigan, and the new weight of my hand on your leg while I sipped from a cocktail.

cloudy lines of another atmosphere.
you and I want nothing but to get out of the layers of this body and into the clean temperature breaker, and I don't know what to feel except that I want more of
But when I step out of the rustling blue, sickness touches me already, the protection equipment can still infect at the fingertips.

what to feel. The hot zone boss only wants to keep me safe, because the personal
The sickness is a temperature breaker, makes me hot then so cold I don't know
sometimes. If I get this wrong, I'll self-contaminate.

Curtailed (hospital green) for the thing that makes me smile at myself in the mirror
off. One wrong move and the hot zone boss will draw her finger across her throat.
It transmits person to person: the current between you and I that we can't turn

with a motion. I stop, afraid of fatal mistake, though I'm already on my way.
each piece of personal protection equipment. How I peel. The hot zone boss speaks
In January, I am the hot zone boss watching myself from a suit of eyes. I take off
I.

AE TIPPIN

Self-Contamination






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This, like other things, opens me to receive the information and light of you, of your nearness that relieves the ache and accelerates it too. Outside the blanket, the air is biting, and, after tonight, the stars will be frozen into lines, the photos out of focus. Darling, I know the camera must blur a thing to make it something more. In print, the stars will all be falling—falling and falling.

Inside the blanket, you say what you hope will happen, how a shutter open for a longer time receives more light, more information, more picture. You say this as softly as your lips brushing my ear, as warmly as the good shudder of my body.

camera, then return.
me, blurring stars into star trails, into streaky lines across deep sky. You set up the follows: guilt. You're doing a project left undone for longer than you've known night, bunched in a blanket. Isolated together where only one sort of sickness I needed you, so we meet secretly after six weeks apart, lying out on a cold spring
III.

never go together.
vast icy mountainside, shadowed and pristine—just two places of a million we will it went big big landscapes, red rocks, sunset violet, blue, then ink. My brain went me in the last row of the darkened theater. When we did, my brain went small then while we wore our own. I kissed you against the haphazard used books. You kissed stop reflecting smiles, when you kissed me against a storefront selling sunglasses into the big windows. That was an afternoon, tentative and full, when you couldn't That was a golden afternoon, late in the day, late in the winter, sun shining

Alm 79

SETH MCKELVEY

carry on, carrion
in the sigh
of the storm

bleating
to hymns
be long
in tooth
and claw

do you care, Aeon?

blowing minds
across the pond
toy boats
and so on, soon
into the airy yon

you carry oaths, bleeding eukaryote, into the yawn

Let let enacts its indifference

AIMEE WRIGHT CLOW

Met stranger tonight. In the dim back of the bar, where rarely anyone stands until the front's full, or if throwing darts at worn-down targets, I stood suspended, drinking between the desire not to be alone and the desire not to repeat conversations with familiar nameless.

Met placeless stranger tonight, so took him to the old storefront I inhabit and invited him to stand in the middle of the room. I opened curtains on the giant windows. All the draft and smoke. I undressed him, posed him, then let him his own motions. Offered food: raw mushrooms and arugula, a microbial bed.

Fed stranger tonight, but faceless, he ate too quickly, so consumption occurred incorrectly, so the food went not down but into the wrong pipe: path out of his neck, back, cage, bone, spores that vacuumed cells from surface skin, back into him.

•
Outside, the lightness of world consumes too. The absent curtains as allowance of a day to walk into.

Left stranger home, asked if he would *stay, if you want*. Leaving, I passed my windows watching him self-skin into an altar.

Outside, I plugged, un-plugged, un-clogged, de-muffled ears and tried to hear the sounds of routine as joy becoming, the recursion of it. Walked to work on machines. Drove to work to teach. Inhabited paid spaces to watch other nameless tangle, two-to-one, three-to-two, four-to-one, points sharing lives, forms projected into fulfillment. Polygon as not a given. I counted what I have had, could have, irrational numbers, continuous streams, named myself as Real, named myself in lines, a sequence.

•
Incorrectly consumed, microbial food is spores that suck cells from skin-net, one-by-one, pulled back into bone or blood. The net, not continuous, is more akin to sponge, so once the one-by-one begins, before it ends, skin exists in patches.

His incorrectly consuming body before a window: sun on muscle streaks, moon on peaking veins, bulb on oxygenated puff of poison-fighting puff.

•
At night, I returned, paced circles around him. He was eating still. His skin, disappearing still. I tried to trace the spores from his tongue to each point of puckering, then mapped in red ink the cells on me that would scab if I mimicked or was him. He shifted a bare-muscled chested I watched expand, contract, again, again. He lifted a hand covered by skin slowly tapering.

I, in witness, us, alone, this room, his puckered skin released to air. In our quietness, what normally might have taken touch, occurred by wind, proximity. A creation of two, embedded in one, a pin, a pulse my abdomen swollen.

So now, I, a choice: to eat as he eats; to eat while I watch him eat; to ask for hips to pull the uterus to bits; or to only pace circles while he consumes; to slowly-vulture, a boney sinkhole or statue. To wait.

And is this not what each point wants: a line; some shape?

•
I read to him, a book, evoked barbers who let the humors out before they shaved a person's surface thin. This was a healing then, so I asked the stranger if he wanted to stay again. But his lips, his voice, were a past now consumed. He shifted pose. I walked outside, watched him through the window, voiceless statue. I walked to work. I drove to work. I paid to watch other faceless enact love in public spaces. I circled placeless. Named him as home. Knew the line of, lie of it. The porousness. I circled him, lightly touched his bone and asked what it felt like exposed and wantless. He traced me, my sphere quickly growing. Tap-asked what it felt like repurposed and waiting.

•
Consumed correctly, air fills any gap in a frame, so if a lung is sand and spread, lightless-night infiltrates where there once was breath. So if ulcer eats intestinal walls, wind breezes into stomach like spinning on the cliff's edge, red rock, desert air. So it's night again. So lights out. So instead of potential. The words evolving from him as wind as he starts to respond to I asking, pecking. So he's sneaking out in stop-frame gestures. I know what night does to the hapless. Still I nod him well. I take his plate. As he slinks out the door and past the windows, I naked pose in the middle of the room, my bulging frame, one day that looks as eight months late. I place arugula on my tongue. Bare-cheeked, bony-toothed, I smile.

Shellwork

MICHAEL BORTH

Breaking shellwork and catatonia
through liquid mesmerism
and the abandonment number-series
inevitably repeated.

To fall slender through the pupil
like a body into pool
and to put myself everywhere
and to continue to reach for you
in the rooms they give us
in the nights we steal
to pushing and licking
in the customary desperation
that is both pleasure and hypnosis
feeding, ingesting
the taste will make us come back
will make us need to again.