



EVERYTHING IN ASPIC

Issue #2 // winter 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS



**Welcome to the second issue of *Everything*
in Aspic:**

it's happening again!?

- Chelsea Margaret Bodnar & Stephen Lin -

CONTENTS

Lori Brack - <i>Attempts at the Fall</i>	1
Jackie Braje - <i>Laura</i>	6
Beth Gordon - five poems.....	8
<i>Place All Items Larger than a Cell</i>	
<i>Phone in a Separate Bin</i>	8
<i>The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You</i>	9
<i>Seat Backs and Tray Tables Must Be</i>	
<i>Returned to Their Upright Position</i>	10
<i>If You Are Unable or Unwilling to</i>	
<i>Perform These Functions</i>	11
<i>Remove Your Shoes and Place Them</i>	
<i>Directly on the X-Ray Belt</i>	12
Jessie Janeshek - five poems	13
<i>Easy / I Forgot I Wasn't Supposed to Be Bleeding</i>	13
<i>Ex-Lady / Play, Play, Play</i>	15
<i>I Can't Finish the Jazz Age; It's Unnatural</i>	17
<i>Wait for the Deer to Rot</i>	19
<i>You Say Life Is Short, Head Down to the Firepit</i>	21
Brenna Lee - <i>Hypnosis</i>	23
Valerie Loveland - three poems.....	24
<i>Never Marry a Man Who Has Been on Unsolved Mysteries</i>	24
<i>Unsolved Mysteries: Stories Without Updates.</i>	25
<i>Unsolved Mysteries: Robert Stack</i>	26

Joshua Zelesnick - two poems from *Insert Coin*..... 27

“I’m still utterly terrifyingly human”..... 27

“Stark, dark, unforgettable”..... 28

author bios.....29



Lori Brack

Attempts at the Fall

How do we draw a line between a poem and a novel and a memoir? The imagining mind does not respect these boundaries ... both gender and genre are endlessly blurry. - Eileen Myles

1

I am writing with flame on onionskin, on leaf skeleton so fine I can see through. The beat of my heart, pinch of desire, chiming center. I devour. I want to gorge.

Break it apart with my self. Not my pulse, other than its flutter. Break it open. All the way behind my eyes, the press, the shatter.

2

In the genre of my loves, each text dances on the shelf, bindings shiver. They won't stay where they belong. In the morning I classify and file. By night, I sweat into pages, my fingers and tongue flick up sense, melt where it touches.



3

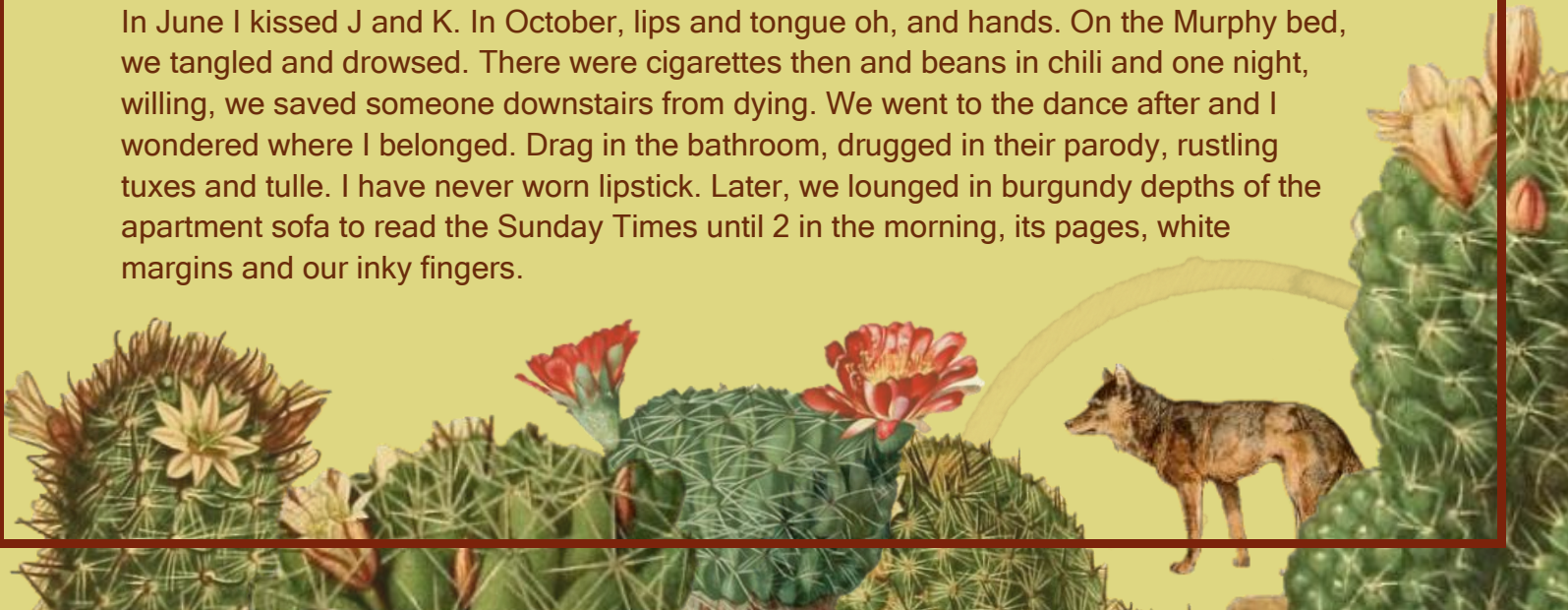
Bed snug against the corner in my furnished apartment, your knock woke me and I stumbled back to covers after letting you in. You came under the sheets and we discovered the old position we imagined forebears practiced, hinged at pubic bones, mounting, mounting. In that dark you said I love you the first time poised over the brink, and I. I loved your laugh and your past, my idea of you. I ran my hand over belly scars—knife, street, L.A. — and wanted to.

4

I keep thinking, years on and off — you asleep across the river. Brown as the cliff, I had to squint to discern your long legs from the scree. I crossed the water for you, sharp stone bare beneath us and waterfall so loud we could not hear each other's breath - nothing audible so small as our damp insides, sighing and the slight, so ephemeral gasp of us drowning.

5

In June I kissed J and K. In October, lips and tongue oh, and hands. On the Murphy bed, we tangled and drowsed. There were cigarettes then and beans in chili and one night, willing, we saved someone downstairs from dying. We went to the dance after and I wondered where I belonged. Drag in the bathroom, drugged in their parody, rustling tuxes and tulle. I have never worn lipstick. Later, we lounged in burgundy depths of the apartment sofa to read the Sunday Times until 2 in the morning, its pages, white margins and our inky fingers.



6

Voluptuary: Feel it on your tongue, the way vowels shape your mouth, as if you are eating the cool cream of dessert, making sure sweetness touches every part of the warm interior.

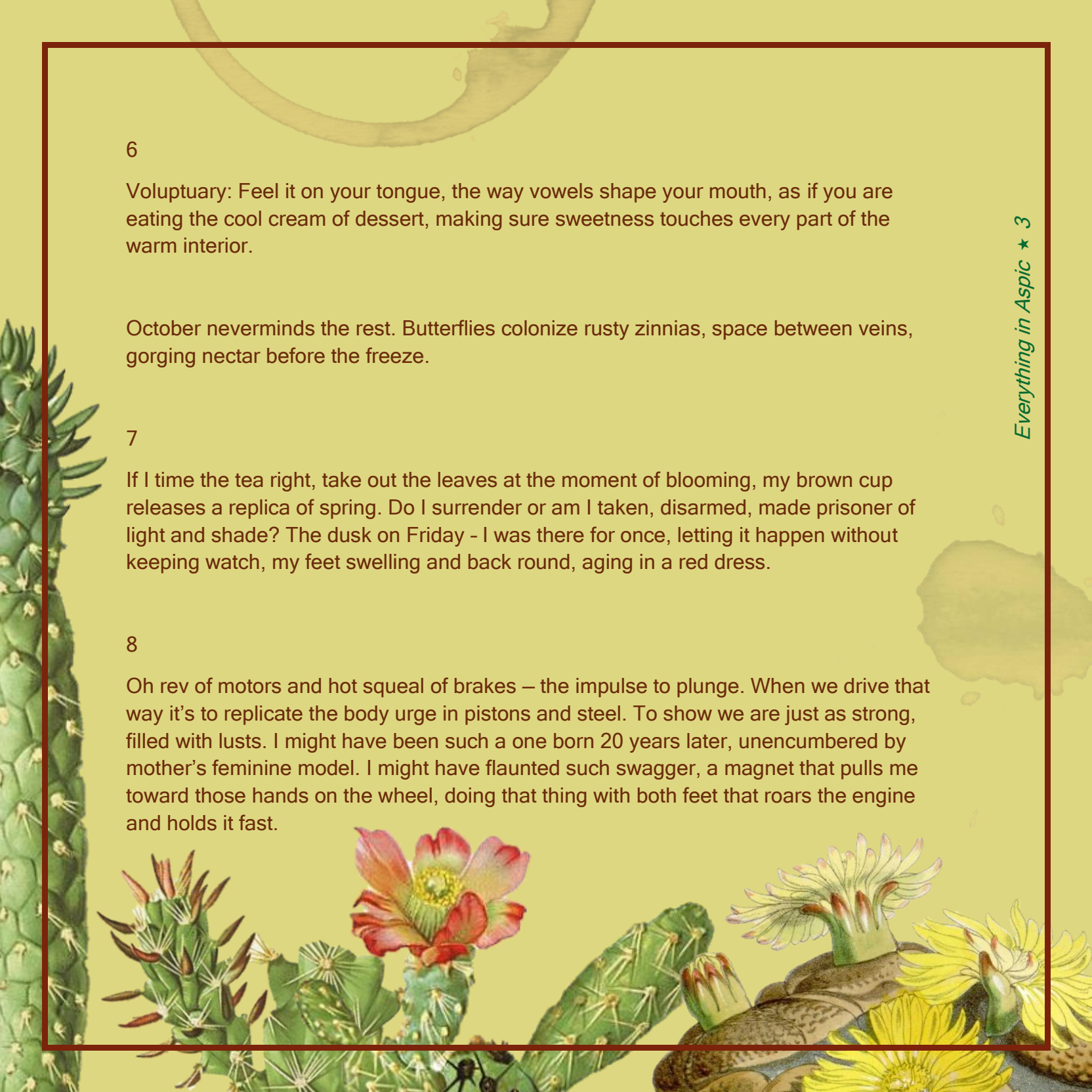
October neverminds the rest. Butterflies colonize rusty zinnias, space between veins, gorging nectar before the freeze.

7

If I time the tea right, take out the leaves at the moment of blooming, my brown cup releases a replica of spring. Do I surrender or am I taken, disarmed, made prisoner of light and shade? The dusk on Friday - I was there for once, letting it happen without keeping watch, my feet swelling and back round, aging in a red dress.

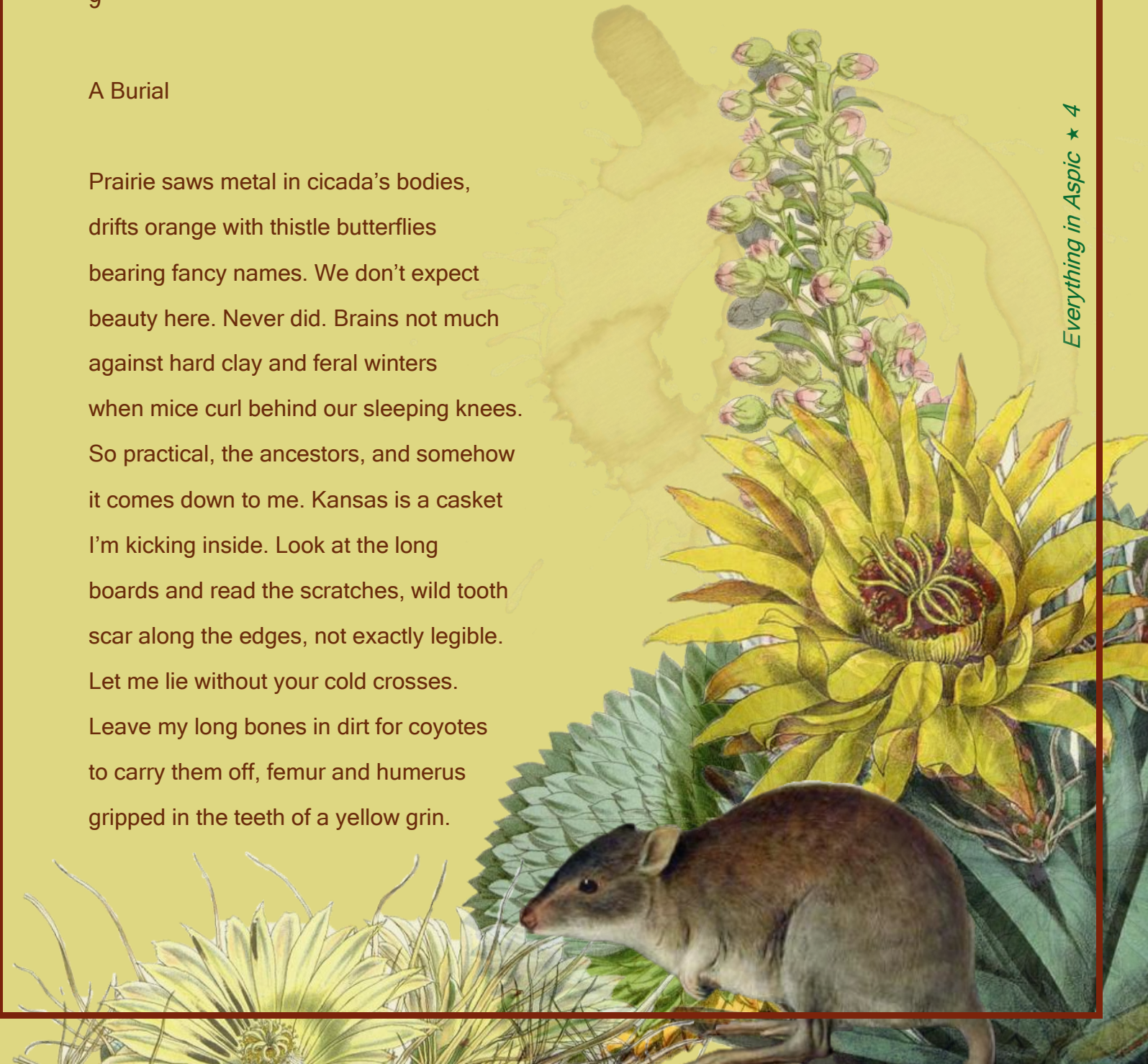
8

Oh rev of motors and hot squeal of brakes – the impulse to plunge. When we drive that way it's to replicate the body urge in pistons and steel. To show we are just as strong, filled with lusts. I might have been such a one born 20 years later, unencumbered by mother's feminine model. I might have flaunted such swagger, a magnet that pulls me toward those hands on the wheel, doing that thing with both feet that roars the engine and holds it fast.



A Burial

Prairie saws metal in cicada's bodies,
drifts orange with thistle butterflies
bearing fancy names. We don't expect
beauty here. Never did. Brains not much
against hard clay and feral winters
when mice curl behind our sleeping knees.
So practical, the ancestors, and somehow
it comes down to me. Kansas is a casket
I'm kicking inside. Look at the long
boards and read the scratches, wild tooth
scar along the edges, not exactly legible.
Let me lie without your cold crosses.
Leave my long bones in dirt for coyotes
to carry them off, femur and humerus
gripped in the teeth of a yellow grin.



10

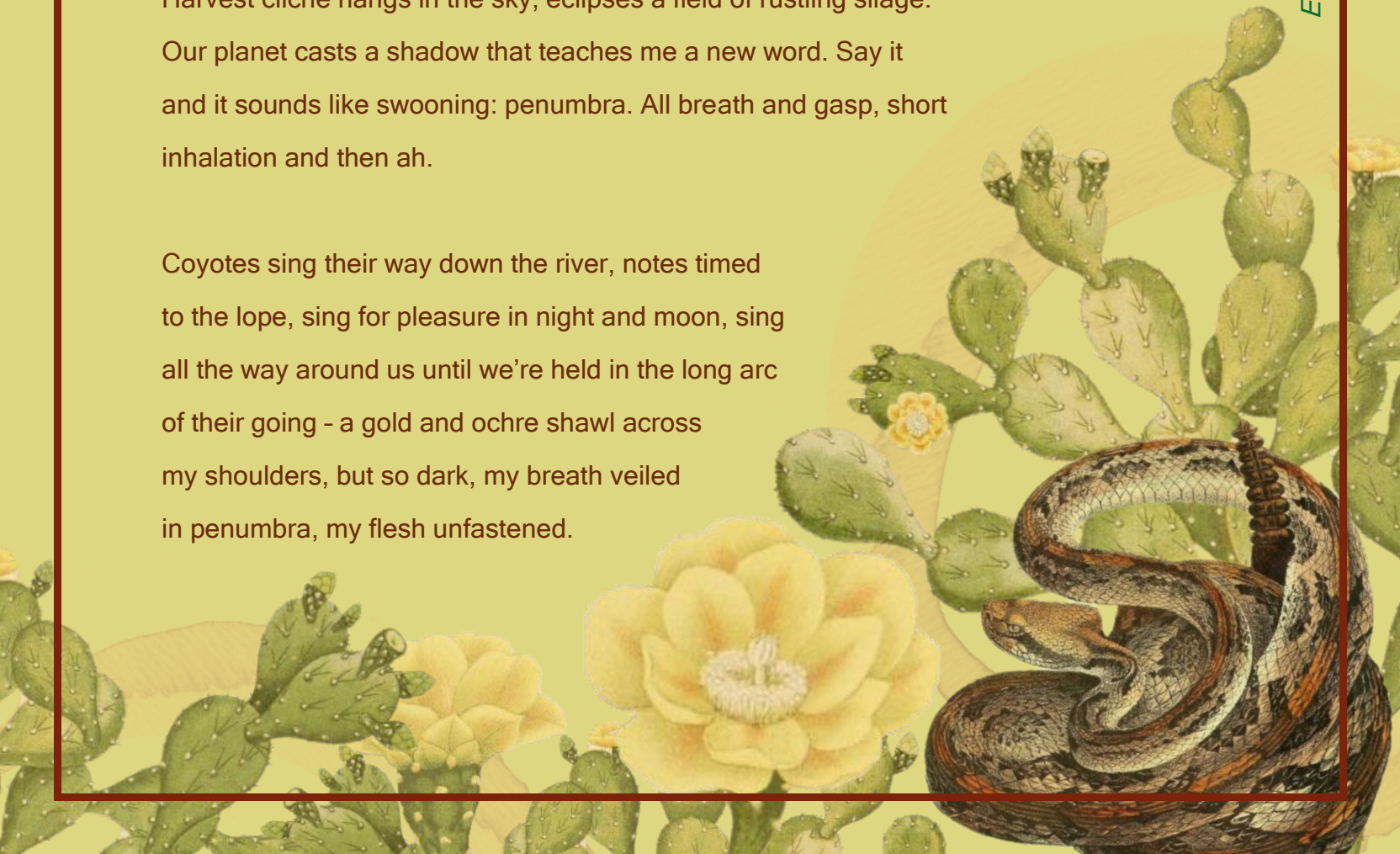
Animals' underparts are paler, belly and sex, wheat-buff shortgrass bent in hurricane wind. Coyote puts nose in the air and snuffles long news from the gulf. In town, air slides across windows the sound of brush through underfur. What made us get up from deep beds of pleasure and push the plow, rinse the linens? I pause over rough fur, one moment tangled in fence, the next adrift in a gale. A swath of blackbirds rises like notes in an aria of howl and yip.

11

Harvest cliché hangs in the sky, eclipses a field of rustling silage.

Our planet casts a shadow that teaches me a new word. Say it and it sounds like swooning: penumbra. All breath and gasp, short inhalation and then ah.

Coyotes sing their way down the river, notes timed to the lope, sing for pleasure in night and moon, sing all the way around us until we're held in the long arc of their going - a gold and ochre shawl across my shoulders, but so dark, my breath veiled in penumbra, my flesh unfastened.



Jackie Braje

Laura

I lived in the woods.

I lived in the woods and watched Winter
abandon its holding:

 the carcasses of deer,
of rabbits, the birthroots exposed

by melting snow as a wet dress fits the body.

And the way my hips could counter their inward

 knowing as a young girl,
blooming out from their sockets,

 resisting the soil.

I learned that my body would cut

 itself along the red edge

and it was the only pain that would ever

 fully belong to me.



I lived near the ocean.

I lived near the ocean and its green permission
sent me running, bent to the coastline as I tripped,
and the nail in the sand became the nail in my knee,
breaking the firmament dividing my water and mortar,
my earth and heaven.

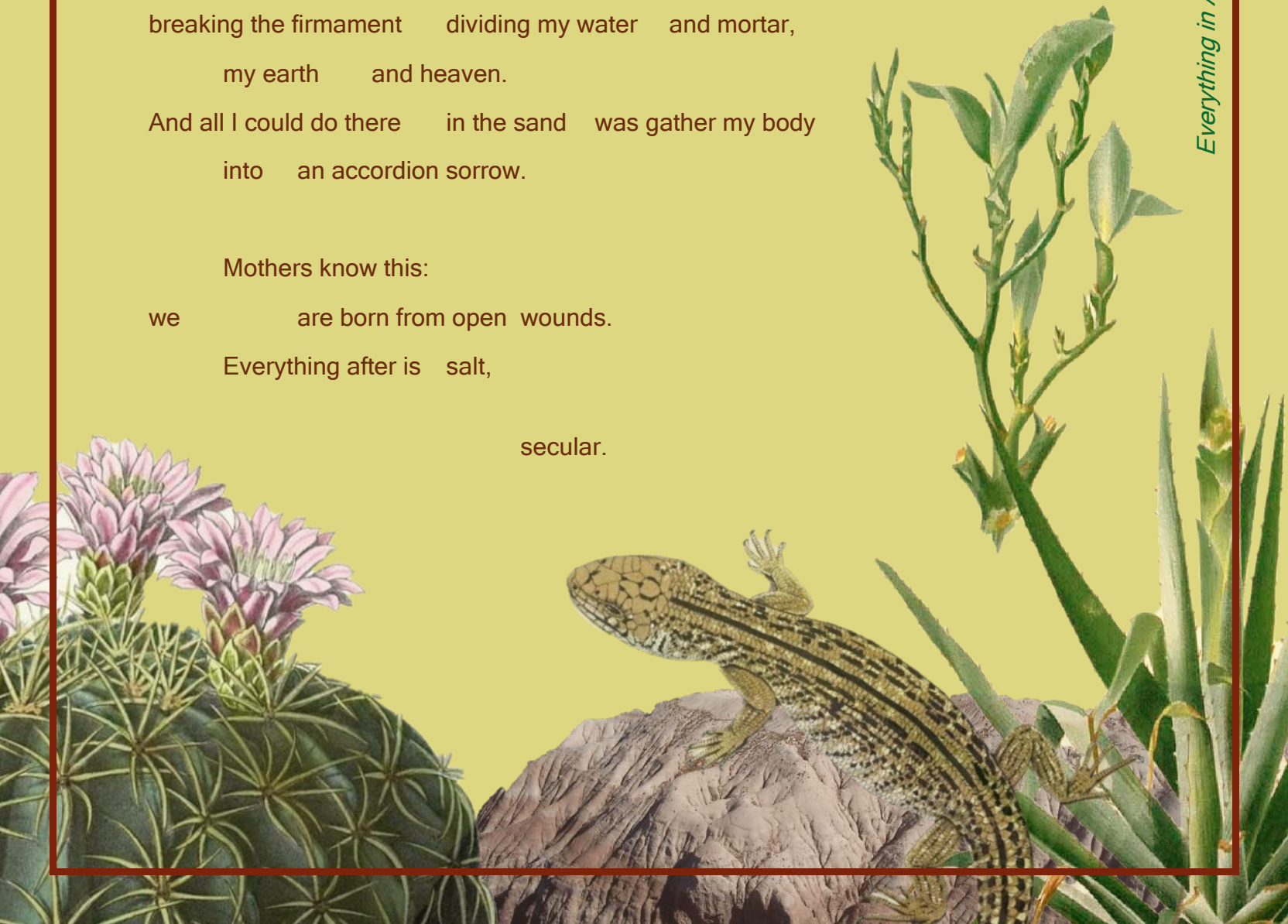
And all I could do there in the sand was gather my body
into an accordion sorrow.

Mothers know this:

we are born from open wounds.

Everything after is salt,

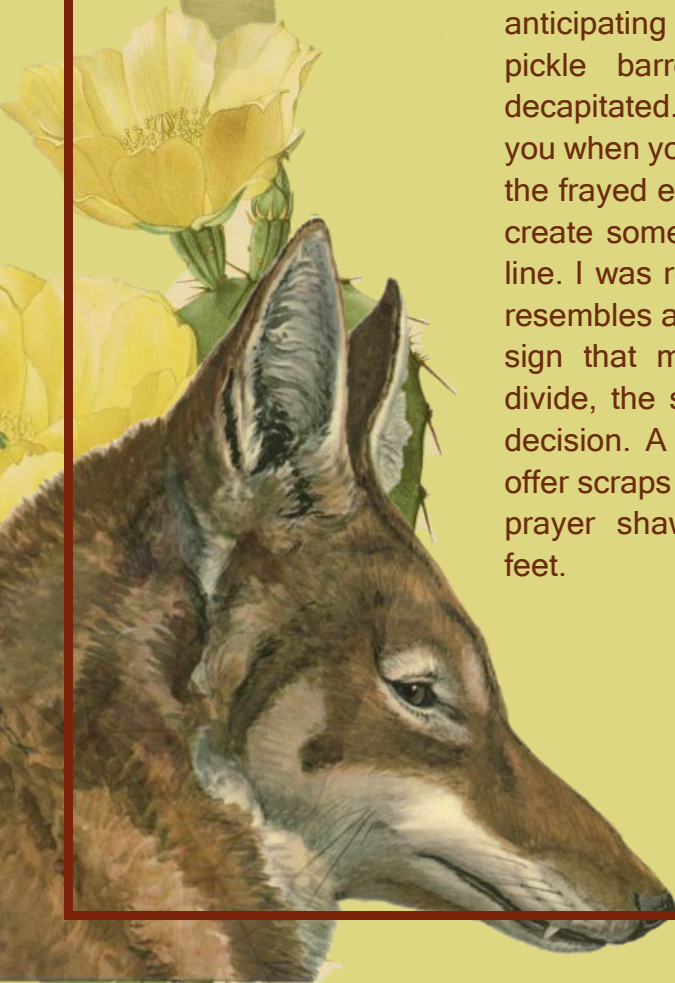
secular.



Beth Gordon – five poems

*Place All Items Larger than a Cell
Phone in a Separate Bin*

You will remember the apple stand, so close to the highway that I was afraid to open my door. This is not how I want to die, anticipating elderberry jam & crocheted pickle barrels. But here we are, undecapitated. Did I tell you today that I loved you when you took my kitchen scissors & cut the frayed edge of your old pajama pants to create something that resembles a straight line. I was reminded that nothing in this life resembles a map. I will remember the green sign that marked the eastern continental divide, the spot where rivers must make a decision. A crossroad for all travelers who offer scraps of true love: roadside tomatoes, prayer shawls, unread palms, unwashed feet.



The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You

My father drove into oncoming traffic today, his tangled brain searching for escape. The windows in my apartment are nailed shut. My mother grabbed the steering wheel & course-corrected, eased them into the church parking lot & called me to say that I was right, she would not renew his license in March. All travel documents revoked, his known world shrinking one shard of glass at a time. The maintenance man is puzzled by my request when frost is expected tonight. I need to know I can disappear without need of a front door. Setting off no alarms. Gather my father's coat & shoes, bible & comb. Take him by his hand, & lead him down this blossomed mountain, one new step at a time.

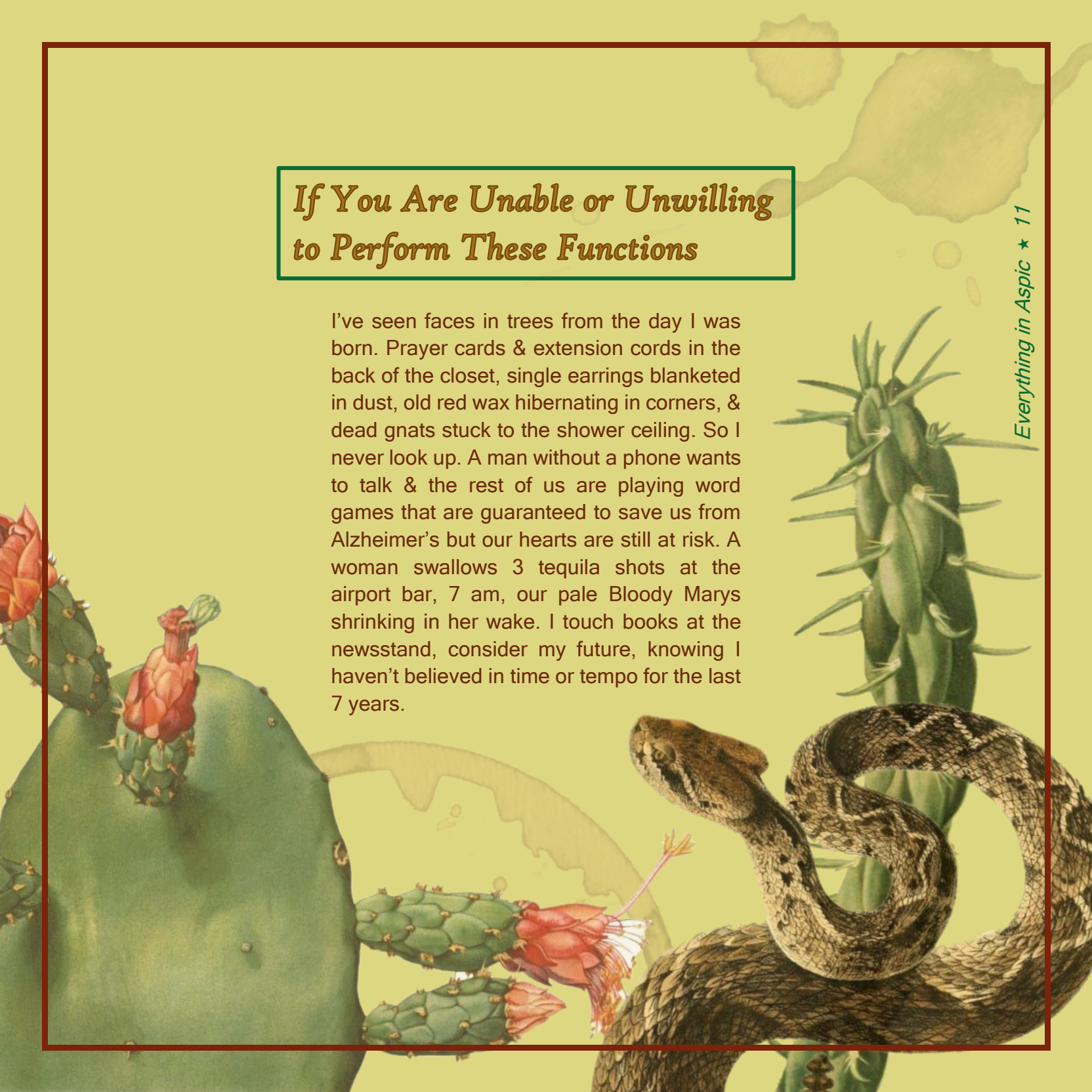


Seat Backs and Tray Tables Must Be Returned to Their Upright Position

The human heart drained of blood looks like wax encrusted candy, an albino chalice, a resting place for headlines. Bodies found in a North Dakota barbershop. Husband arrested after pleading for his wife's safe return. In the remains of Atlanta, I met a couple who sold their house & set out on a tour of mass-shootings, consoling survivors in churches & bars. The back of their RV filled with mops, bleach, funeral card maps. They know their way by the sound of running water. Mid-town diners, the library of St. Mary of the Sacred Heart Elementary School. The top of a Ferris wheel in Wheeling West Virginia. The rivers, high or dry, will lead them to slaughter. They follow, like trout, upstream.

If You Are Unable or Unwilling to Perform These Functions

I've seen faces in trees from the day I was born. Prayer cards & extension cords in the back of the closet, single earrings blanketed in dust, old red wax hibernating in corners, & dead gnats stuck to the shower ceiling. So I never look up. A man without a phone wants to talk & the rest of us are playing word games that are guaranteed to save us from Alzheimer's but our hearts are still at risk. A woman swallows 3 tequila shots at the airport bar, 7 am, our pale Bloody Marys shrinking in her wake. I touch books at the newsstand, consider my future, knowing I haven't believed in time or tempo for the last 7 years.





Remove Your Shoes and Place Them Directly on the X-Ray Belt

City crews are changing out the drainage pipes between midnight & 4 am, & when I wake my water will be unsafe, in need of boil. I walk across these wooden floors & you say you can hear my steps, like gun fire or hail. Something hard & dangerous if you didn't know it was me. This world is filled with violence & pain, but a hymnal all the same. Lighting orange tapered candles & pouring bad wine down the drain. I pray the river will not escape tonight. I pray while we sleep, clouds will creep down the mountain & under my door. Hold me like a sainted child who saw God's winged eyes & didn't burn alive.

Jessie Janeshek – five poems

Easy / I Forgot I Wasn't Supposed to Be Bleeding

Little arrow is a meteor
the ghost story mother in the meadow
trust her subjectivity her love of double drummers
her beaver tail a-drumming.
I get a cherry drink I never open it
say it's a slasher film
say it so I stay wet between my legs
say it to pacify a little girl named Dracula
remember how I bled on the flag?
remember how you didn't miss the money?
remember my mermaid-colored tennis racket?
In Tennessee we would drive by a house
w/ a UFO parked in its yard a neon sign over and over
we'd pull into the gas station heat-thick
think do we really deserve this?

I was excited for *Blonde Ice*
but its plot was so ceramic
pay any man to fly you back and forth from LA
cigarette smoke in your throat.
Rub the crust of sleep back into your bloodstream.

The girl who told me it meant rain
when the leaves turned inside out had a wet dog in the dream.

Everyone had a long-haired dog
or everyone else took a baby
from a mall fountain filled with babies
I could only take cheap makeup.

I've been thinking about the drawings
of blood-soaked motel rooms freshly-polished flower brooches
the cannibalism of Hollywood soda shoppes
the one-armed mechanic
how I can't finish anything
how I once preferred the grit of the Laundromat
next to the liquor store
to the thought of the hills
swallowing my father
and sure her kills are good for a transplant
but they're a little too basic
not thanatopic enough.

I won't climb up that road until I think the deer's rotted
otherwise I've been meaning to tell you
I keep eating ice cream
the sick cat hops upstairs back to the heat.
I like the long look of the girl with the nosering
the surreality of Louise Brooks coming from Kansas
and part of me always thought I missed you
by not going Midwest
funnel clouds/funnel cakes anything could have happened.



Ex-Lady / Play, Play, Play

All the starlets pose w/ the same stuffed animals
all the stars are pure
desert darlings we were told
to keep our equilibriums smoke cigarettes in swimsuits
deliciously unhealthy
or Kansas City princesses
but I can't get back in.

The basement is a folktale
a fragile woman in pink nightgown dying by a tomahawk
stop, the husband didn't kill her
she died on the couch with cancer pinchers
still I wake to used car dealers
switch the plates in California
you say our sex is genuine
still I wake up to the news
that in a mirrored universe time is moving backwards
toward clawfoot tubs and brocade waters
the wonderland murders when a diner was a laundromat
or on the ocean liner please give me a call.

I dream I piss myself but I also speak Spanish
Lulu is a national institution but her dresses don't suit.
I can't finish the jazz age until the clown shows myself to me
in a glass shard on the creek road
you say it's quackery



you say there are things to be done
but we just want the pop music galaxy overhang
the ring competition.

I feel like I'm a countess
w/ the glimmer of a saint's life
in a trance like I'm so lazy
I don't focus my eyes.

Sometimes in the dark
I'm still afraid of footnotes
ants and leaks and aliens and angel dolls
I don't know whose hand to grab
or where to get the travelers' cheques
whether or not to call the cops
or say I killed the black dahlia.





I Can't Finish the Jazz Age; It's Unnatural

gray silk pants and a black paper skeleton
penny-ante in the uncanny valley
like it was yesterday
I said, relax honey-haired
in the shared bathroom wet crepe paper
in the wooden stall a topaz tub like the hot springs.
I thought our friendship was natural
but you summoned all the white dogs in Brasov
where getting fingered by the big man
should have been the death of me.

I say relax honey-haired a shade or two changed
maybe you lost your title
like a Nancy Drew film in the public domain
and then off with your headtop
but then the roots were too dark
and we're walking with sodas where all time runs backward
parallel to the ballpark.

I close my eyes I don't want to be heralded
sometimes this is Berlin with a Kansas girl dancing
and riptides of absinthe
where only one lipstick looks good on my mother
in a blue velvet pouch poison pink
where what you see in the mirror

is not what you look like to authorities.
I never got that girl
they found dead in the hatchback
was supposed to be some kind of countess
and tomorrow will be hotter
a sleeper day
and the killer will keep going back
to watch her rotting.

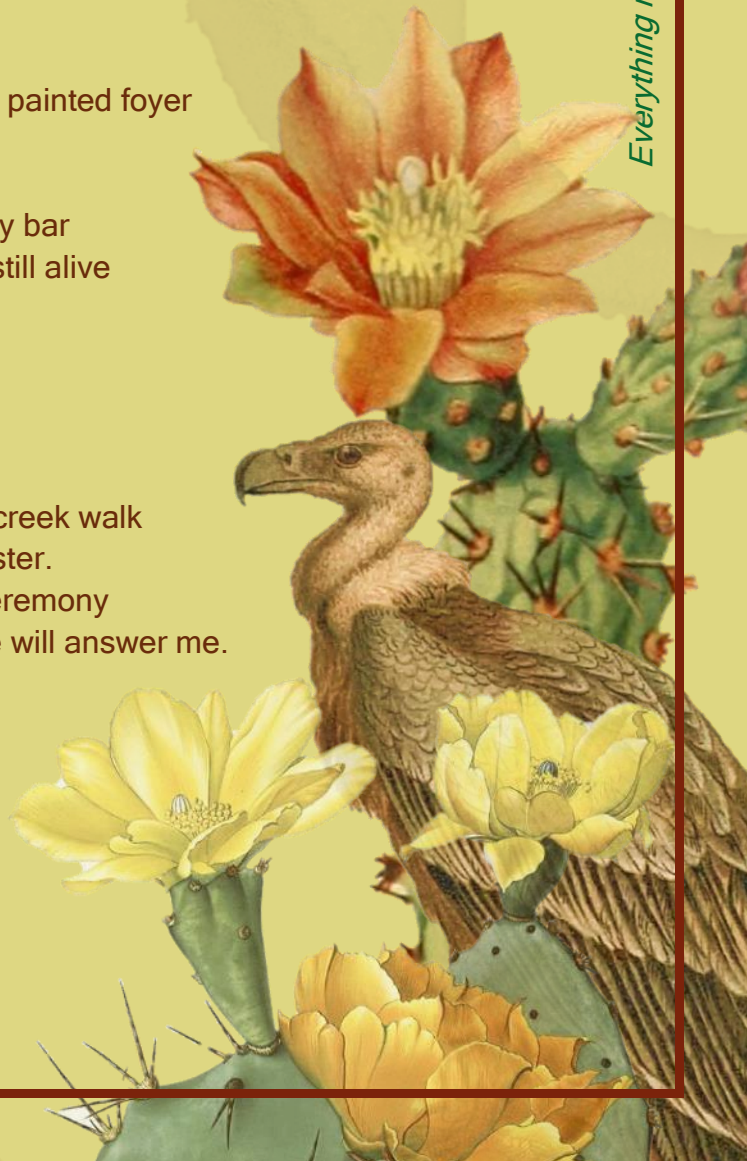


Wait for the Deer to Rot

Can't get the smell out from in between my legs
 everything's temporal
cats piss on the bed
 to remind me they're animals.
I guess I better start with his cornfield
 the swiss-dot swimsuit in the gold painted foyer
 or the second-floor moon of the summer.
Any contact with the dead is expensive
 scythes and the red-headed reaper at the titty bar
 the glittery capsules how am I still alive
of thunderstorms of the video game sun
 coming to life and swinging around me.

I tell myself it's ok to go slow
 but I hate I don't get the layout
of the bloody motel. I hate I'm scared of the creek walk
 can't write a check can't jump into the roadster.
I put it on tape like a secret ceremony
 like a summer place crackling but no one will answer me.

The dowager says have an affair w/ the lifeguard
 in the civilized way
you can't stand one more season of rain
 you wonder what life must be on St. Helena
nothing but bondage and birds
 know you'd be dead if you didn't



shove yourself through some day
if you don't think of drugs
if you ignore the ants parading so quietly.

Everyone hates women
everyone wants to hold you upside down and shake
six nights since the vandals
and it's still not safe
so why does walking in the dark feel ok?



You Say Life is Short, Head Down to the Firepit

Not much else to recall in the rain besides climbing skeleton steps
getting shoved into cars in the mud
eating a Buster Bar with a Buster Brown haircut.

The long clown dolls hanging in patriotic overalls
we couldn't hear the fireworks still we tried to make it fun
milk-shake shape-shifting next to the trailer court
wondered why they put daisies in the dead deer's eyesockets
why our mother never taught us to love women singers
or hot wire a car.

I can't say I'm doing any better after the campsite
I understand wanting to die on my own terms
stay suspended in time.

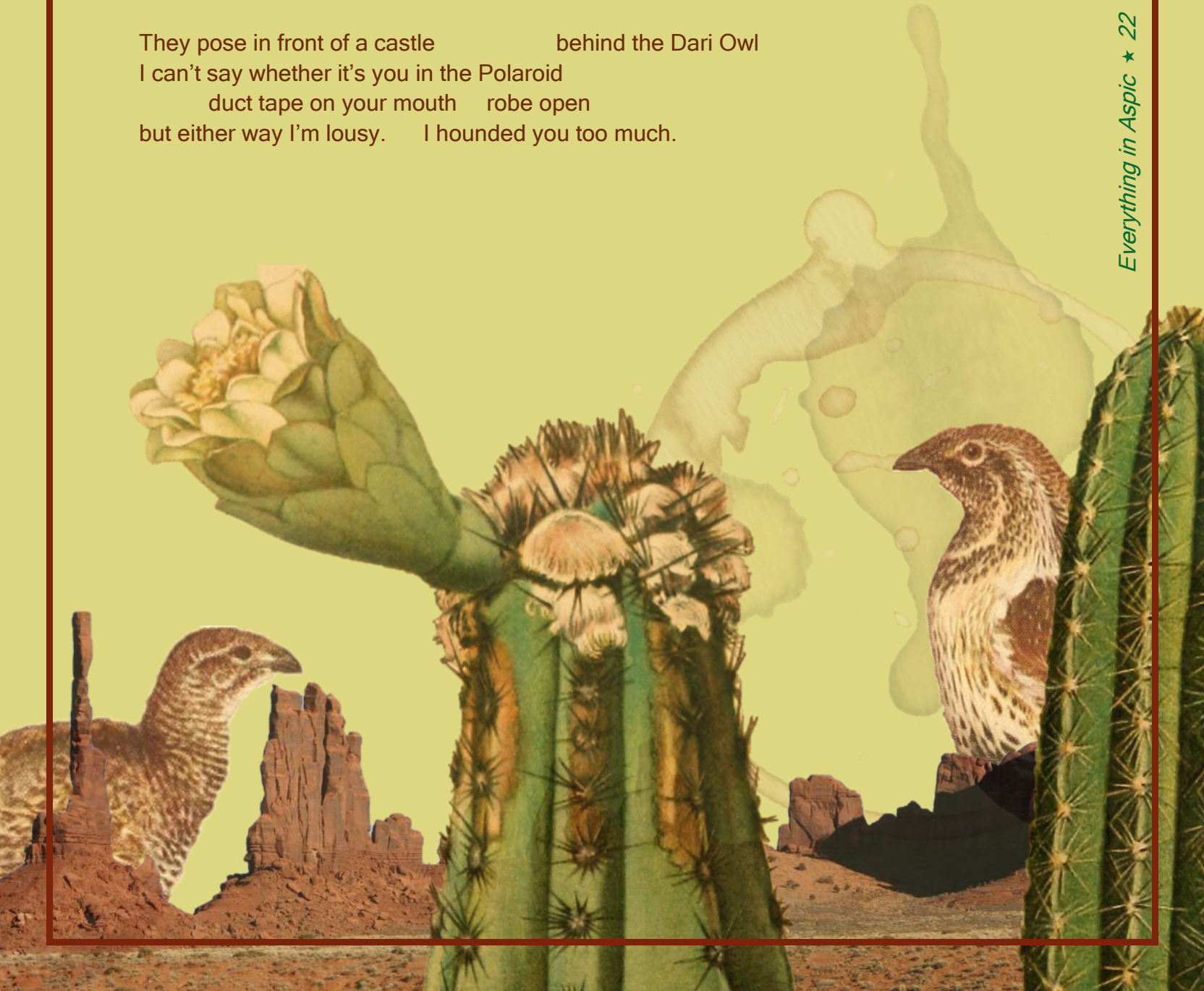
There's a desire to walk to the old Hills store
for a Cherry Coke Slurpee or a catapult
to name every baby Chainsaw or Blair as an alibi.

When the old cat wakes up
I wonder if she knows where she is
I still can't understand foreign films
among the stacks of *Teen* magazines
the allure of singing twins
vandalism, why anyone's afraid of hashpipes or knitting needles.



He wears a mask and has one hand on each girl's shoulder
one says *I miss my bangs* the other cuts them.

They pose in front of a castle behind the Dari Owl
I can't say whether it's you in the Polaroid
duct tape on your mouth robe open
but either way I'm lousy. I hounded you too much.



Brenna Lee

Hypnosis

prayer is transformation through speaking
the right words hypnosis is change by
listening bury me in ambient
noise all things here take time a future
in child rearing thanks you for this purpose I want
to be perverse in the sense of turning away
from the patriarchal from sex as a form
of attention or obliteration but never waxy
pleasure an urge for lack breaks apart the need
for miracle or spectacle have you ever looked directly
into my catatonic eye or moved your limbs to mirror
a head to feel the velvet knots
in the body placate the realization
that turning it over and over causes it to burst
apart only then can I see you at all



Everything in Aspic ★ 24

he begins the relationship
with his first, most outer set of doors
already pried open

If a television screen has created
a picture of his face between 1987-2002

[Unsolved Mysteries theme song]



#3

Unsolved Mysteries: Stories Without Updates

There are a few tense seconds
after the story when we hold our breath in exchange
for an update. Cold cases disappoint us! We suggest
the TV show change its format and call itself: Solving Mysteries.

The fansite updates us
about the lawyers, the investigators,

the parapsychologist. Everyone who has been found
has died. Everyone who is missing has died. Everyone accused has died.
All the widower husbands have died
after getting remarried.

A bodily description paired together with a photo
on television is a magic spell
but it doesn't always summon
the missing person. Sometimes only the ghost appears.



Unsolved Mysteries: Robert Stack

I say Robert Stack three times
and the youtube channel of the show comes on.
and the youtube channel comes on.
the mysteries we want to see.

I sing [Unsolved Mysteries Theme]
I know Robert Stack will only show us

I was learning my new job as a programmer
so I had to practice.
I made a clickable website button that toggled
back and forth between displaying
and

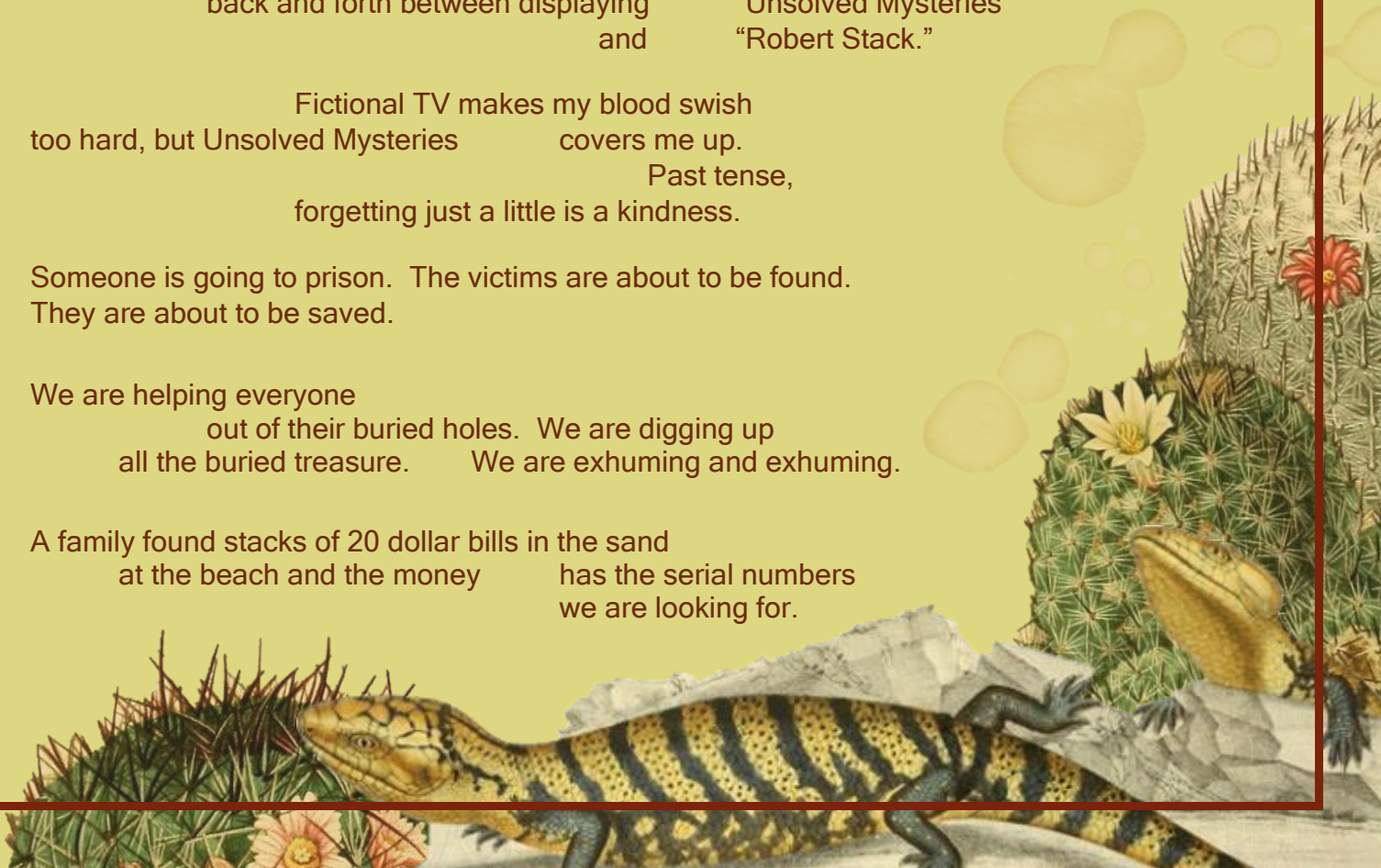
“Unsolved Mysteries”
“Robert Stack.”

Fictional TV makes my blood swish
too hard, but Unsolved Mysteries covers me up.
Past tense,
forgetting just a little is a kindness.

Someone is going to prison. The victims are about to be found.
They are about to be saved.

We are helping everyone
out of their buried holes. We are digging up
all the buried treasure. We are exhuming and exhuming.

A family found stacks of 20 dollar bills in the sand
at the beach and the money has the serial numbers
we are looking for.



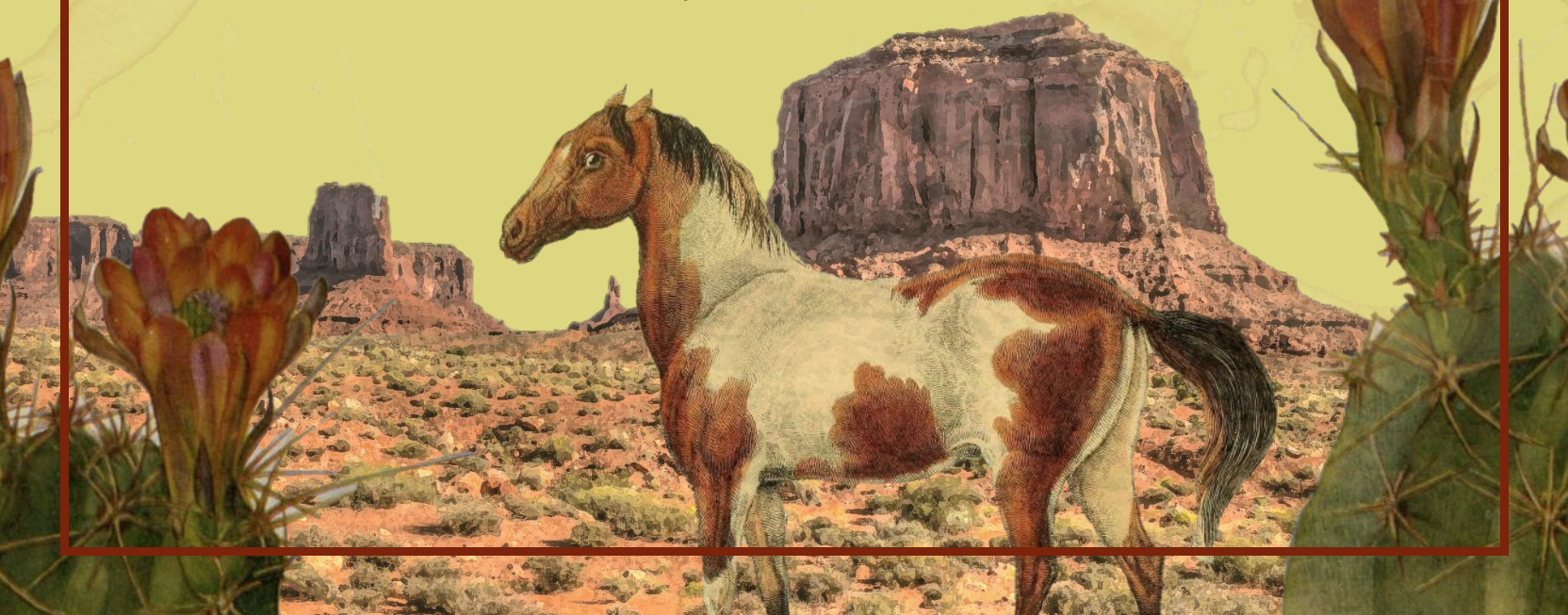
Joshua Zelesnick


Two poems from Insert Coin

I'm still utterly
terrifyingly human
after all, I still have bones and
heat and a little wheel that turns

toward the glow of monitors
midwinter landscape
a palette of grays and browns, fields
cut to stubble, dark forests climbing

the rocky foothills, three men, then
the directive: *confirmed weapons*
three...two...one... I say, *missile off*
the rail, screen lit up with white flash





stark, dark, unforgettable
tv ad, robots, spiders, scripts
scrapers, crawlers, ants, scutters,
arachnid, spindle, grunk, aperture,

hounder, harvesting, grease monkey,
node, phantom, wrangling, wrapping,
importer, firebug, or any
automated or manual

equivalent to mine the archive
one of these should work, like what do
you want to find, the *collateral murder* video
black sites, humvees, the real location of julian assange

AUTHOR BIOS

Lori Brack's book of poems, *Museum Made of Breath*, was published by Spartan Press in 2018. Her poems and essays have appeared in journals including *Another Chicago Magazine*, *North American Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *The Fourth River*, *Entropy Magazine*, and others. She manages a project in Kansas dedicated to the professional development of artists in all genres and assists with a project bringing Asian art to elementary and secondary school students.

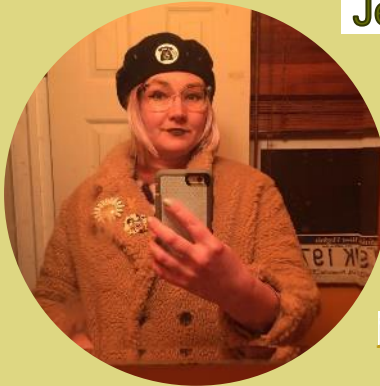


Jackie Braje is a Brooklyn-based poet-person, the Programs Director of The Poetry Society of New York, and the Editor-in-Chief of Milk Press. A Pushcart Prize nominated poet, she has been published in *The Minnesota Review*, *The Nottingham Review*, *Bridge Eight*, *Vagabond City*, *Dark River Review*, and elsewhere. She is also a 2019 Brooklyn Poets Fellow and the recipient of a 2020 Mineral School Artist Residency.

Beth Gordon is a poet, mother and grandmother currently living in Asheville, NC. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and nominated for Best of the Net, Pushcart and the Orison Anthology. She is the author of the chapbook, *Morning Walk with Dead Possum, Breakfast and Parallel Universe*, published by Animal Heart Press. Her second chapbook, *Particularly Dangerous Situation*, is forthcoming from Clare Songbird Publishing. She is also Poetry Editor of *Gone Lawn*.



Jessie Janeshek's full-length collections are *MADCAP* (Stalking Horse Press, 2019), *The Shaky Phase* (Stalking Horse Press, 2017), and *Invisible Mink* (Iris Press, 2010). Her chapbooks include *Spanish Donkey/Pear of Anguish* (Grey Book Press, 2016), *Rah-Rah Nostalgia* (dancing girl press, 2016), *Supernoir* (Grey Book Press, 2017), *Auto-Harlow* (Shirt Pocket Press, 2018), and *Channel U* (Grey Book Press, forthcoming). Read more at jessiejaneshek.net



Brenna Lee is a Detroit-based writer. She received her MFA from Naropa University, where she was the recipient of the Leslie Scalapino Award. Her work has recently appeared in *Bone Bouquet* and *BathHouse*, and is forthcoming in *Reality Beach*.






Valerie Loveland is a poet and programmer living in Philadelphia. She enjoys audio poetry, video games, and celebrity cats.

Joshua Zelesnick is the author of the chapbook *Cherub Poems* (Bonfire Books, 2019). His poems and political essays can be found or are forthcoming in *Jubilat*, *Word For/Word*, *Juked*, *Counter Punch*, *Labor Notes*, *Poetica Review*, and *DIAGRAM*. He teaches Library classes for a public school in Pittsburgh where he lives with his partner and two young daughters.



The background is a full-page marbled paper with a complex, swirling pattern of red, brown, and tan colors. In the center, there is a rectangular text box with a light cream or yellow background. The text is written in a dark brown, serif font. The text box has a slightly distressed or aged appearance, with some faint, illegible markings visible behind the main text.

Thank you for reading the
second issue of
Everything in Aspic!