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Meredith
Blankinship

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SEXUAL CIVILIAN

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“Underneath, the Serpent”
—Idol of St. Hilary, Ludstone

The parties are in sugar
Water falls from the body

Credenzas
filled with candles you tried
to keep from me
no matter how many times
you see the rising
of the printed word
for weeks and don't listen

My uneasy feeling that she
is still bleeding somewhere in here
she has obscured the tail
of blood wagging obscenely throughout
the hallways

Your dark saying
 untwinned
The place you had asked
 me to hold
Blue chassis you owned me
 the cracked dome light
you sold me
 I turn the light off
but it keeps on ticking
 I am trying to cut
out the light
 The opals are revealing
their milkiness reassures
 as it wanders it burns
 me the whole way down

when the words worst I
didn't burn them—lit instead the
preamble, the walking filler to hold
their place, a hook to hang my
spleen, my small squall, without
destroying the necessity of being
found out

Trapped hatching

hatching of negative space due for some high rise
some leather cords to wrap your mouth around

I grew my teeth in like everybody else

brought flowers to a corpse

this damn hot breath
fermenting first blush

OBSERVE THE DIMENSIONAL DAUGHTERS
MARCHING TOWARD THE FOOD COURT

Still out here
better known as your very best bad
born under a flaky and intermittent sign
noisy in the field's sun, my throat blocked the following
convulsive trickle:

with a mammal I would call my own
with a mammal I implore by day
with a mammal I repair by deafness

Dial tone, the creep of speech in every
kind of light, the mangle of gooseflesh lifted
from its slick plastic, its eyeless way of knowing

Dial tone, my cunt tries to escape my body
and lash around your face

Steer clear of the manifold, stray new into scratched openings
announcing each secret
what you keep to yourself, stalker

Stalling on the ridge, ready to push your vehicle into overtime

overdue

how would you recoil if asked?
what does the tip feel like pressed
against your puny exterior, your
being's shelf, your crystal rim

no mistakes this time – you know that

you confess just by being here

Bring bright talons to the sidelines today, drape lengths through the dearer locks of hair,
oh deathless one remain untested in obliterated tip-toe, oblate vector, only derision
between the thinning ends

It's okay not to recognize immediately

this abscess

Nasty Pulse, or:

Thefleshthefleshtheflesh

When you rang I could go no further
What is so captivating alone
becomes revolting in a pack
Splintering, deciphering,
sister of darkness

YOU WATCH, WE WANT

A monster is only monstrous for its way of being in time
The shift rather than the shape
itself, chilled copper wire tweezed from under your skin
Which face of more the same do you prefer?
Get rich quick on nausea and its prone flickerings
animated by the will to spar, to awe, sleight of hand
thrown upon your pins and needles
It breaks bread or brandishes your face at you
stops at nothing to screen, to scrap the ruckus, flaps open
perpetually unsatisfied
Turn instead the translation bedded in dreamtexts evaporating,
already sisterlights long gone without their map
withers slapped you get on now making that choice
guided by an idiot who never knew to need you
but whose copper hands held you when you
knew nothing else

Always asking what to do about the moon. Upon it the forces
of constancy have broken their selves to bits since time
made water and it rained for centuries

Nobody will beg you to leave
No trace of the known quantity
No motive hatched the dark social
the so very habitable refrain
“It stands atop a mound of masks” and you know who’s at the door
you know how to pass a cold night like a kidney stone
Yours is the solitude that has been divined, divided, handed down
I can teach you how to hear the object’s speech
I can bring you to the cusp of its handless reverberation
to capsize in that shallow grave without calling out
without coming back

Here's the hitch: I
remember nothing

I dressed: a lightning storm
I know you are on your way
I am ready to bright your eyes now

RECOGNITION

When the vessel first snubbed its maker
planetary stone sunk secret into the earth
carried by angels
buried by angels
lying entombed so
we sharpen our nails into shovels
and shake down to the hilt
Make the manic substance keep its promise

All your mothers are warnings or threats
All your mothers speak gently to each other in the trees
in the habit of critique
in the elbow of song
sung in a language more petrified than ledge
announcing its fear of heights
There is no way to guard against
such damaging effusions

O holy, holy waiting, there is
no circuit-break once the switch is flipped
no putting the big bang back together again
I don't fuck with apologies but still
I miss a known quantity

If you can make a clean break you should
instead invoke catastrophe
the best you can
Forget the calls
of your mothers and go back further
into time no one has names for
when wisdom was a buzzing transfusion
from flowers that burst unbidden from
a fox's underbelly

I like this. Don't trouble yourself.
In three days my body will forget
its past provisions and cobwebs will grow
over the holes, that's why
the rim of the crater is still the best place
to call from

Things being what they are you should
drink up young lady the years are long
Your mothers grow blind in the treetops
and limp irresponsibly
up there while we brats
turn their leavings into altars below

When you hear the voice just know
it is not speaking to you
There is always another woman in the room

SEXUAL CIVILIAN

I'm still out here
your best bad being
born under a flaky and uncertain sign
blinking in the field's sun with a mammal
I would call my own

Just a reminder:
I remember everything

Every morning scavenge
for some spangled harm
Slept on an ashtray of dead leaves
and dirt looks

The prairie cupped its hands around its mouth and cursed a flame to the sounds of
youth in the night

I feel ancient now there's nothing
to hold on to

It's like water, but stickier
It's a crown you must exhume
yourself
In the spring
you wear it on your ankles
like a bear trap

it's time to cast off
it's time you pick up the knife
Our Lady of Uninvited Guests
bringing you bloody bandages
seething
a lumpy new pillow

Was the performance worth its contents

licks its paws

I want you to imagine
the kitchen's dark
gratitude but you don't
live here anymore

when you ask me about an opening
I estrange into powder and float
I make mine tender for anyone who will stand still

+++++

That season I grew a stupid flower
in the middle of the kitchen floor
People were standing up out of their coffins
floating on the long blade of sea
It was hard to keep things hidden and then
harder still to linger on a grudge
I dream of being good when I get home
This time
This one time
for real

You said I made you a sexual civilian
while we gathered at the glory hole
at the end of the world
We found a plate to smash
to seal the contract of never
talking about this again but first
you were berry-eyed in the curl
of a hot pink tincture, restricted
access you didn't touch me
until we turned sinistral
a hapless bone and its
verdant wastefulness

These days I am all consumption
with a brain full of spheres
and a belly full of answers
One time there were mountains
nearby I woke up spitting
in bed and when the light dampens
I go outside, no questions asked
and stand there in my fear of being
taken for somebody else standing
there watching the night come fresh
and the buildings ripen in the dark
but it's just business
and tomorrow you'll mean it

Give the day a little credit
you were never going to finish
anyway your mistakes split, make new, search
all night for a proper host
This isn't a test but it's hard to bear
light & rotting apples in the yard
All I ever hear's the constant hum
of death & I always hum along
for now my only joyful refusing

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“It stands atop a mound of masks” is from Borges’s *Book of Imaginary Beings*.

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Meredith Blankinship lives in Atlanta, GA. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming from *NOÖ*, *Beecher's*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *GlitterMob*, *Sink Review*, and *Finery*, among others. She collaborates with the artist Dana Haugaard on *Heat Rituals*, a multi-medium project.