

W H A T  
I S  
W H O

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## MORE LIQUID THAN YOU MIGHT IMAGINE

### CONTAINMENT MISSION

On the first week, God created stuff.  
The second week, she created storage—  
Units, cardboard boxes, control-  
Temperature rooms to store the stuff.  
I enter a room & refuse to hug

Everyone at once—no group hug  
Nor no quick procession. I would rather  
Spread the joy throughout the coming  
Minutes, a couple raindrops quenching  
The dirt's gasping each moment at a time.

The slow pitter-patter of calm refreshment & knowing  
Tomorrow is gonna be a day also.

Despite the best of efforts, the Liberty Bell nurtured  
A crack in its own home, & despite the best

Scolding, I still became a butthead, messy,  
A minor liar, an atheist. The brain  
Closes during certain parts, but the mouth runs  
Wide open, a dangerous concoction like

Whiskey inside chocolate, a beehive hung  
At eye level to the dog, my mother with  
An annotated version of the Bible.  
One among many system errors. It is

Raining, all at once.  
When someone names you the wrong name,  
You are stuck forever

Called the same as some  
Spewing dictator or a part  
Of the body many

Of us cannot locate, the sticker stuck to your chest.  
When someone calls you the

Wrong name, you have one option—learn to be the best Kyle  
Or Diane you can be.

## NIGHTMARE SACK

A goat limps from the labyrinth hauling presents in my nightmare sack—  
Dead pet monkey, blood swept up by Alice from *The Brady Bunch*,  
Mr. Banana's limp carcass like an empty backpack, or

A polar bear tears to pieces an object never discovered without the blur.  
Could be a rough collage of this family—the Late Cough syrup era?  
No luck. Each night I am sucked into the valley.

I can never push the hill, but here, the hereafter, I can say the earth's tumor  
It turned into a rhino, the rhino spoke English, very broken.  
The coffee mug dangling from his snout represents my angst.

I have waited twenty years for the giant green teeth to return, to finally swallow  
That backhoe that churns apart my house every dream cycle  
Leading to another bright day. My midnight babble!

Or an airplane scoots this doofus to a new place to collapse like Wyoming.  
My flight attendant is me, I am out of peanuts. I have not the guts  
To hop down the inflatable slide into another sea writhing with bees.

## I AM WRITING LETTERS

To a person who does not exist.

How is your mother, but more  
Specifically, how is her cockatoo?

This has been difficult what with the goats  
Getting loose the moment it began to hail.

We talk  
About bodies often lately.

I child all afternoon covered  
In paint.

It is not easy finding meaning in the moist  
Gunk a brain vomits.

The dog daily digs a hole, but does not have  
A bone to nuzzle into it, to cover.

& I feel  
The guilt!

Did you rent the movie  
I suggested in my last letter?

I have forgotten  
Your real name.

The last time I was in Massachusetts  
I dropped my cigarettes off the sixth floor balcony.

The teal box tumbled onto the balcony  
Below.

The teal box tumbled onto the balcony  
Below.

I have included a mixtape  
Called "Thicket."

It is noise mostly  
But I hope you find a song to comfort you.

You hear  
About Bill?

Good reminder  
I suppose.

Hope I have the right  
Address here.

The chickens whine so loud  
These days I cannot think straight.

## THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY FANGS

I am half otter; the rest is mostly spare parts.  
We barrel into this life, pushy to be haha  
& helpful, but often it ends dark, or at least covered  
In white zucchini, which is what they call cocaine

These days in space. It has been years since anyone  
Has seen a real zucchini, but the beach, barbecues  
Are well-loved, often despite the mold. Often we insist  
On celebrating, unlike this guy I loved in

College; he was short one sit-up to becoming  
A police officer, though shoo-wee goes the universe  
Wiping its future brow, better off no doubt for his core  
Failure, though boo-hoo poor him, he did struggle years.

He once told me, *Once I had this picture of God  
In my head, & now it is gone.* He chases the image  
In comet dust across the sky, & I lean in to cheer  
Him up. I show him my whole smile, buy an old-fashioned

Astronaut helmet to break the tension. To no  
Avail! Last week, he ran into the small-time dealer  
On whom he honed interrogation tactics like shoving  
A shaken bottle of cola right down his pants.

The dealer's one remaining henchman, a gator  
On hind legs, emerged from behind the lamppost, severed  
This guy's most important artery with a single swipe.  
The head dangling, the body swallowed by insects.

One thing never changes—often it is only  
The head we leave behind. Buck & his antlers  
Over the television, the enemy's skull defeated  
& stabbed through with a stake, this feller so bulbous

In Houston he cannot roll out of bed, can only  
Speak in questions as classic episodes of Jeopardy  
Air. This was around the same time I remembered  
My tongue was still a muscle, my teeth remained  
Bones sideways inside my one artificial skull.

## THE BROKEN & LOST DRONES

It was when they taught my mother to fly  
Drones I became suspicious of our chances.

One sent to California & came back  
With a mouthful of tied cherry stems.

One sent into the mountains & came back  
Spray painted greenish-blue.

Greenish-blue like the sky was rubbing off.  
They nearly matched like two twins fooling the teacher

& we did not notice the drone re-enter our lives  
Till it made a hard splash in the creek.

One sent to church camp  
& never came back.

One sent to the store for butter  
& never came back.

One sent into the woods to deliver a note to my father  
& never came back.

My skin has become very soft  
Like the blankets I chewed as a child.

Today I found a bill from the government for all  
The broken & lost drones.

The bill was for a large sum  
But honestly much smaller than anticipated.

## SWALLOWING FOR THE LAST

My grandmother always had white kittens.  
She named each one Snowflake.  
Seven or eight at a time flopping  
In & out of the shallow holes the government left.

A road cannot decide to go on or end.  
It turns half-heartedly to gravel.  
It is the beginning of the end of a very long journey.

*That is not snow*, the doctor said  
Pointing collectively at the kittens dotting the beige carpet.  
Loose hairs hung from their mouths like straw  
Between the teeth of farmers in the museums.

This was before the doctor went to prison  
But after he removed my tonsils—  
A scar I have been swallowing for the last thirty-three years.

## WHAT IS NEBULOSITY

In the seventh-grade, Kathleen made a cloud  
In a box, & when she brought it  
To school, it got loose & threw shade  
& eventually a rain shower  
Over the other projects, like mine  
A catapult called “The Dr. Dre Trebuchet.”  
A fine piece of machinery till it became  
Wet, the rapper’s face shriveled atop.  
It turns out Kathleen’s dad did all of the work.  
He made the cloud. He ruined the class.  
Everyone had to change shirts.  
The other day I heard Kathleen’s dad died.  
He had a heart attack while wrestling  
A prize-winning pig back into the barn.

## HOPE WHEN THE LIGHT IS SQUEEZED

I was betrayed over & again—cheated on while trying on cargo  
Shorts at K-Mart, hats at Hat World; money skinned from my wallet

As I slept like a baby in the back of a blue  
’89 Corolla on her voyage down that highway to meet what she

Would later call her family; my arm ripped from its socket once,  
Thrice, six times, in passion, in blind fury, in pure boredom.

Who doesn’t love a good fist fight in public? Me for one.  
I am tired & thus I hope when the light is squeezed

Out of me I am not found, but alone at the bottom  
Of a very deep & very dark body

Of water, so no one can mock my bloated face or harvest  
The gold caps on my fangs. No one ever taught me

How to brush my teeth, & it feels like no one  
Ever will. The clock strikes another midnight, the ancient

Rooster has its last crow, the old crow its last roost.  
Then, finally, the dust attacks from its hideout in the field.

## WHAT IS AN ENTANGLEMENT

Evan arrived into my life a tender blessing. Like an art gallery in a cave, a whole herd  
Of deer in my kitchen, a lady chanting prayers at her home burning down, tinting  
The gray sky a shade of orange, it was not so much his image, his particular collage

Of nose & mouth & hair color, much like the one who birthed him. As lovely as others,  
As bitterly metamorphosing. It was first his voice, the darling sound he made when soup  
Became available, as natural as any. It was second how he danced across the yard.

He made no gripe of the world & its offerings, its deliriums & decisions.  
He did not bother the blue egg glowing in the grass, a child lost from his mother.  
He did not trouble the field filling up with the circumference of geese. When the desire

To make bracelets rose in him, he noted our last twenty-six blades of grass & moseyed  
Onward. He was the child who knew the dirt's last speck of hope, the geese's  
Honking wish to be left alone. In his elementary school plays, he was the one

Brave child who always volunteered to play the old lady.  
He once brought me his two hands  
Cupped around a broken egg & asked me if there was anything we could do.

## POEM WITH REAL BLOOD ON IT

I am who I am because my little dog bites me  
When I lean in to clean her wound, a previous  
Attempt to bite landed from another little dog

Who makes its owner who he is. Cal—a clipped version  
Of the end of me I never learned to pronounce  
Right. I say it like the animal with the udders

Swinging side-to-side. The bite makes my dog finally  
A dog at all, shivering in her red collar  
On the orange couch. Two colors, some of these details.

Cal says, *Why don't we just keep them separate, on leash?*  
The relationship is not the leash. It is the dive  
Into a heap of mud. It is sharing a chicken

Strip at three in the afternoon. If a name contains  
Any truth, it is this—you can always rearrange  
The letters. I become silicon scuba hut or

Hint luscious cab or (my favorite) hi cubical  
Snouts. No dog intends to bite the entire world.  
Well, it all leads to this—squeezing epiphany

Out of whatever is near. Mashed potato kumquat  
Path. How did you end up there? How does anyone?  
Each time I get to the end of the dog park, I know

You chose not to kill me, shiny teeth. You are not a who.  
You are a what the fuck again & again, again.

## THE RISE OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST

In the opening scene, he learns if wishes  
Were horses he would need a bigger pasture

& as I'm hopeful a quality portrait  
Gallops from this yammer, he hopes a poem can  
Sprint out of him, red paint straight from tube

To easel. I've already told you too much before  
Painting. I've already sketched the horses

To die. But what about his wishes?  
To stop confusing classist & classicist,  
Renaissance painting & panting repairman.

He cannot bear all the nuances nowadays.  
Nowadays there is clamor for him to sit at his

Wobbly desk & write a poem. How lucky to be  
Him & his dumb grin. He begins  
*Have you ever tried fixing the toilet in this era*

*Of disposable pipes?* His idealized love as the source  
& the force of his argument. He is so beyond birds

& that is sad is what I'm saying.  
The microscope peering deeper than expected  
Embarrasses the micro-organism, its white crux.

Of course, he, too, was once a single cell. But others  
Slushed him, smooched him, a crown of sonnets

They hoped for as they moseyed alongside their soft-  
Headed boy, now grown-up & determined to put  
Some books on the shelf, the books dotted in stickers.

His delusion & his delicacy. Every prize he can win  
Waiting. His poem still unwritten, but hey

Eating here a bar of chocolate with a Shakespeare  
Sonnet lining the wrapper. Modification of what  
Came before. Lying or laying? He once wrote

A poem he liked, but it was not modern enough.  
Or days later, the composition still not open.

The veil not yet lifted. Only he spits Ted Berrigan  
Rehash. *Cacophony & corn cobs I am alive!*  
He blurts this, but others have come to disagree.

Thinking Berrigan is ugly, they want to pluck him  
From this lineal tree. The ground & the wind barely

Touch. The trees curiously grow so much  
Fruit. They are capable of so many canoes. He begins  
To resemble a log, bark half-stripped.

The lack of buoyancy of his tongue is a concern for some  
But not for the reasons you'd think. His buffoonery

In the night club, rubbing his scales on every person  
Wearing black, his poem still unwritten.  
One cannot edit a blank as God quickly learned

There alone in his cave. But he downs six daiquiris  
& goes home to begin again, rewrites the beginning.

## WHAT IS COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER

I am cold. For a poet—they say—you  
Sure are literal. I was not particled  
To be particular, or even practical, & certainly

Not paracrine. Literature is  
Ancient, & so are my ancestors,  
Especially the ones who preferred to live in Native

American society. Now, not  
The call & response into the forest,  
But the call for a response, the phone ringing & the other

End pleading—Tell me your answer, now, please!  
Will you get married again? Vegan cheese  
Or six-meat pizza? Who really pulled the trigger? What?

I am taking a shower, but can think  
Only of a year. It was 1956.  
A birthday cake shaped like a hearse. Uncle called it a light-

Hearted joke. Sometimes it is impossible  
To speak louder, so it is necessary  
To bring your own karaoke machine. The only bird

Watching I have done is those Sundays after  
Slaughter when the latch was not best closed &  
The chickens they'd flutter about the yard like the last clouds

Of May. Some we could catch with our sprinting.  
Others would have to wait, snagged from a branch  
Or the bucket seat of a Ford, rusted northwest corner of this yard.

Colony collapse disorder is when  
It all starts dying, but no one knows why.

