

W H A T
I S
W H O

by Biscuits Calhoun

SECTION IV

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TO WHATEVER HOUSE GOD THIS MAY CONCERN

In the humid cold, you may call me back.
This is what happens. The achy trees
Lose their litters as trees aim to do
But such trajectory is lost when facing
Finally the ground dotted with one's own
Globs rotting on the ground, & despite
All odds & symbolism, from inside
A final pear sprouts like the bubbles
On the mulberry twig soup I made for us.
The divine are patient & thus soup.
Lately my bones describe themselves
To me as hollow, poorly-oiled gears.
I have no use for them, nor too
The latest flat-screen television, but yes
The red-tail hawk or its talons.
I want you to take off your pants.
Okay, I did, too, you can basically see.

I WAS BORN

I was born with a lazy eye.
Still got it, just look
At my lazy eye.
It cracks just to creak
A little glimmer out
Like a pearl mentioned by a clam.

& beyond that first scream
I have developed a lazy mouth—
Words deflated with letters squashed
Together like fitting the remains of a dog into a box
Much tinier than any dog
I ever remember seeing.

It betrays my one feeling:
My enthusiasm.
It is blown back against
What is left of this body—
This lazy shoulder
Dislocating each darkness.

This lazy beard refusing to stand straight.
Or these lazy paws incapable
Of plucking the proper chords.
But worst of all is this
Lazy ass, lazy ass, lazy ass.
It does not even cycle the energy to sit.

& it is becoming harder & harder to find
A solid tree not yet burnt
Into the crisp where I can hide—
To let my lazy ass lean, to let my lazy paws train.
To let my lazy beard wean, to let my lazy shoulder whine.
To let my lazy eye rest.

WHAT IS SOME BODY

Do you know your tongue is a muscle?
Do you know it is limited in protecting your face?
One man claims a poem is a machine.
An orgasm, says another.
Often this body feels so electrical problem.
A day's worth of microwave beeping
& television toasting backed into these gonads.
Did you know you can live forever
Without a microwave, a penis?
Did you know I can no longer
Lift my arms above my head?
I will not drink soda pop for a week, tomorrow.
I will do some sit-ups, maybe twenty.
Today, I strolled the park till my pits welcomed
Stains like two suns in a startled sky.
I did not ask to be made, but
Since I am here already, I reckon
I should rub against something now.

WHAT IS FLIRTING

I knew how to juggle once.
My great uncle was a great wizard.
But then he died & I forgot.

I feel like I am chasing a plastic sack through America.
I want to watch you put your pants on every day
Is one way to prove you are serious.

That is a lot of pants
Is another way to demonstrate you are paying attention.
The floor still transfers rug burns.

The heat from shuffling our feet.
I might still be a child.
The picnic in the snow is still packed in the warm van.

My knees knock to the beat of Emily Dickinson.
My hands say, *I want you to take off the top of my head.*
At any given moment, I may appear & mow your lawn.

Do you love my enthusiasm yet?
Tank tops with sharks on them!
Sweaters with whooping cranes on them!

Life is full of mishandled affection!
Each year, thirty-seven celebrities accidentally kill someone.
Every day is this thing, then that thing.

Flat tire & new bottle of cologne.
Christmas bonus & dislocated shoulder.
It is better than the alternative.

The fish bump their empty heads against our canoe.
I hope you have a good coat.
It is very cold tomorrow.

GOB LIFE

The frisbee was frantic into the battering wind but once
High it floated effortlessly. A single neon moth.
There you are & it is intricate
& all you do is make it better. Nature is good
Mediation. Even the family blabber could not spoil
The breeze in the backyard, the tank
Tops hanging from the line flapping
Like enough birds along the river.

Biscuits is a real person, very involuntary.
The impossible plural effects of not knowing
What you are cooking. The word “stoked” is a lively apparatus
Which must imply its flickering.
One includes many.
It will be completely straight-forward.
I confess I was happy till I was asked
If I was. You fold back the covers & it opens like a tomb.

Sway is built into bridges since it is natural
To apple trees. The random ones the size of fists
Soon become practice. Poems are gestures.
After each, I vow never to think again.
Perhaps the face
Is more a foe than the whispers it exhales.
We listen to the ticking of the creek
As it turns its little circles. I stood watching stones

In doubt beside the water
While in the last sunlight flew a mob of tiny bugs
Like code sent from the trees.
More & more water is contained by the machine thrown
Into it. I have transferred

My restlessness, this sense of necessity, to the frisbee itself.
We always end up by the creek. Or it is
A figment of the repetitive imagination.

When I was a child, my father suggested we go
Swimming, but now underwater
In our bathing suits, he is self-conscious.
No stalk of corn will ever be capable of this
& surely no fog. We have come a long way from what
They actually felt
In the days when they made their own soap.
Then the water burps & the tadpoles turn

In the nick of time to frogs.
The night burned on, & I went for a walk alone
Lost between the trees. As for we who “love
To be stoked,” each gap is merely a folder
For future wider knowledge. My grandfather was forced
To recognize his ignorance
When another man explained the difference
Between white & wheat bread at the fish fry.

The pair of stunted black grapevines yields
Oversized cocoons. The afternoon happens
Again & therefore endless.
It is hard to turn away from smooth water.
The tongue cracked in its vibrant calm.
Anxiety is the ultimate border which will later separate
Events from air. My aunt entertained us
With her lie—a story about a moment in her girlhood

A catastrophe in a canoe that never occurred.
A fragment is not a lightning bolt, but a necessary whole
Piece of the sky. As if by scratching
At the experience one could dig out the stars.
There is no paper on the moon.
A poet must try to write the right words.
Life does not have to like you
Before she gives you your money. Smile now.

Liberation later. A single turkey among ducks.
An incoherent monument. Every family has its own
Collection of humans, but not every family has someone
To tell them certain stories are situations. If one cannot see
A decision, one must assume a condition.
I am high,
Which makes me say so. The trees are continually
Testing their own shadows.

AN EXPERIMENTAL RAIN PONCHO

Like a screensaver, a clown fish chasing
Its invisible meal, somewhere I have found

“An experimental rain poncho”
Though I cannot go back to where X

Marks the spot. No pinpoint to cite.
I am a puzzle with no jigsaw to blame.

I am a rampart with a missing musket.
I am a thunderstorm, a backdrop of surf rock.

I am frustrated as I learn this weather.
Delicious gravy & I am dry for now

Underside of this ping-ping tin roof
But only till the biscuits are gone & I must be also.

Good morning, what. Matte gray finish
& a certain need for exiting to begin.

The sky's need for unguzzling.
Now I must go out, to face the mist, the moist.

The thick as tarnation water to swallow
Me whole.

Step One: Push in my seat.
Step Two: Slop up the extra gravy on the scoot

Around the sea of green plastic lawn chairs.
Step Three: Wave to anyone, or at least offer

A gentle nod, to all family in the vicinity.
Step Four: I shake the mouse & the clown fish

Goes missing, tangled perhaps in a reef or a wire
Perhaps sucked into the dry-what-

Do-you-know day I now see was there all along.
There are clouds, sure, but neither terrible nor rain-inducing.

Step Five: Abandon the poncho.
Step Six: Go back for more biscuits.

FAMILY FLORAL ARRANGEMENT

They do not believe in removing flowers from their dirt bottoms.
They also believe in the beauty of vases.
They mold the vase around the patch of flowers.
This is out in the open for every person & animal & god to witness.
There is no fretting over rain, over broken, over disbelief or unreason.
This is all well & good till the field blooms with fat horses.

CUSTOM SKULLS

A woman whittling something
& I felt both terrified & delighted,
Terrified like a squirrel in the middle of the highway,
Delighted like a squirrel in the middle of the highway.
I did not expect her to speak,
As by this point I had lost all expectations,
Not as if humanity had melted me,
& through its fingers I went,
But like I was tired,
& my attention was tuned to cultivating
My garden, where I would grow a potato,
Which no one had done in fourteen years.
She said, Let me give you a simple tour,
Though no realization still flickered of what
She was whittling.
She waved, *Welcome to meticulous craftsmanship,*
Like a dolphin once smiled before diving
To fetch the fish slung into the depths
By a trainer who had no intention
To retrieve the fish if the dolphin refused,
Which, of course, would never happen,
As the dolphin's two main goals in life
It had been determined—
To eat fish & to please whatever
Eyes might be watching—& then she handed me a skull
Much like the one I had lost years previous,
A loss resulting in this holographic head.
She said, *I whittle all sorts of stuff out of these skulls.*
She pointed first to an ashtray,
Then to a lamp shade,
Then she opened a door
I had not yet noticed, & it was a warehouse.
Repurposed skulls—knick knacks & small bowls.
She said, *Most creatures tend to lose their head.*

THE VILLAGE OF MY FEELINGS

The village of my feelings starts a community
Theater. A community theater offers little
Snacks, moderately lit moments
For empathetic epiphany.

In Act I, a police officer eats a pudding
Cup. A police officer found for character study,
He followed he around till
The actual police officer craved

A pudding cup enough to buy one & eventually,
To eat it. The village of my feelings allows a wild
Animal to live in the house,
Sniffing seats for crumbs, fragments of sweat.

Act II is where the doctor ad-libs his monologue.
Life is a sham I tell you, I tell you what. Fire ants
At my ankles. The pressure valve
Shut after those wee years of bawling

Now with the potential to blow. Just look at what I
Can become, a harmonious member of the chorus,
Or, oh, a snowflake on the tip
Of a wolf's nose in June. Brief curtain!

Into the lobby, where no one talks about the Lord.
Suspensions, though, make themselves known in the faded gold curls
Adorning the overhead beams.
It is there I finally met someone

Whose first marriage lasted less years, months, weeks, days, hours
Than mine, & I felt the pain levitate, the carpet did fade.
Crowded heart! It hurts much with trees
Outside slowly disappearing.

Slowly disappearing, I am helping myself be
More mine own main character, helping myself to popcorn
Hanging from the patch of bushes
On the carpet. I am here tonight

& tonight one actor, a priest playing a priest, sends
Himself into the dark of bed without dinner. Act III!
It reminds us of our childhood.
O little branch! I feel you growing back.

WHAT IS PREDICTION ERROR SIGNAL

Keats surprised us, *Bring me the candle...* &
Let me see this blood. What is more flicker
Than our clotting & un-? What pumps more than

Our source of primary light? Say among
Us who knows to spot the melting? My type
B river, swan fountain of hemoglobin.
My waxy warrior of the night. We all

Trade in this meat on our vines in time. I
Know blood when I see it, but you will have
To ask Dr. Moser what artery
It doth spurt from. Am I participating
Wrong? These heart ditties I doodle, their own

Kind infection. I destroy this self, or
Like to pretend I do. Perhaps I am
Just adding a velvet layer scraped off

Elsewhere & slapped over the old glob. This
Migraine is deserved, useful even. Yes,
Edward Mordrake surely learned a thing or
Two from his wailing second face. One man's

Death is another man's artifact. The
Importance of letters. No proof the face
Was not an unpopped zit. Pure bubble of
Boredom. Is this what Keats meant when scribbling
Down *Negative Capability?* Through

The throb, the mysterious maybe. The one
Behind the blue door comes to the stoop yap-
Ping, will you let his story fool you? He

Has been pursued by much pain & this is
Where it took him. This is what he transfers
To us—Love is a total nightmare. We
Are tired of being efficient. I

Do not know why the tide tides, why the small
Turtle hurtles today on the jelly-
Fish's back. But I witness. He asked, *Why*

So sad a moan? I am getting closer
To answering.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CREEK

My friend Jay married a woman named Kay.
I never met Kay, so I did not know what Kay looked like.

The tint of her teeth, or how she carried her shoulders in the rain.
The height her family had come together to give her.

But I know she spent a cold winter in northern Indiana in a trailer with Jay.
Come to think of it—I never met Jay.

No beds, just two musty couches they found there
Kissing end-to-end, right-angled, a triangle absent of its third side.

I know she loved to sing Bon Jovi
To the birds, but immediately shut her mouth

Like a large-mouth on a warm hook
When someone, usually Jay, joined her in the snow.

& when the freeze thawed, I know Kay
Enrolled in a book club at the library where she & two

Much older women read cookbooks & talked
About them as if they were novels.

Then Kay smelled of onions, though she had spent the afternoon chopping beets.
Then Kay woke up with Junebugs in her hair.

Then Kay rescued a stray pig, & she named it Tyler.
Then Kay asked Jay to quit emailing me.

His last one included a picture of Kay
He had taken on a crappy flip phone.

Her head was turned
Left ear facing the camera, but I knew her

Hair was much browner than I imagined.
Her forehead sunk like the ditch out front Jay often described.

It was the year the farmers were to plant soybeans,
But instead they planted eyeballs.

DEATH CRY OF THE OBVIOUS

The police officer did not stop, & then
Earth kissed Mars, two doves on an afternoon of
Swelter, a ship found the wrong dry land, a heart
Attack on his forty-seventh birthday, grits
Thrown against the maroon wall. The brother lost
The other brother & the wagon. Without
Grace, a puddle can be a lake, the forest
Burning like a lover's aging rage. Without
A staple, long poems stand at the wind's whim.
The emergency slide out the window extra
Slippery today. Last night two kids found themselves
Alone with a tub of lard. Also, two birds
On a line, two barbs on a wire. There is
Not much difference between one broken phone
& two. His dog swallowed an unknown something,
Then did burp two bubbles. Two more tricks: falling
Over, then getting up. The blue tape, it won't
Stay! That is what is yelled by the officer
Into his small black radio to Linda,
The dispatcher microwaving a Hot Pocket,
Which ends scolding hot on the outside & still
Frozen in the middle. Lettuce is eaten
By bugs. Elsewhere, the sky is eaten by air-
Planes. & it is here the final lime blubbers.

