



JULIA HORWITZ

Unbuttoning

Your kitchen stands
under your ladder
and you stand
between the two

Sawdust up your arms
sawdust in your hair
flames curl up over
frying pan sides

This is how to scrub her
out of the room

Door clicks shut
mousetrap string of beads
bones click together
bones pull apart
tooth and fork
scalding tongue
seven inch heels
on stainless steel step
you will rip everything
and this is no exception

When you crack the egg
it falls twenty feet
you will rip everything
which is why everything
throws itself over the edge
(except for the skin that sticks
the parts you can't unbutton)

By the time it lands
butter burning
yolk drips over
frying pan side
pierced through the heart
sticky, golden hiss

This is the meal
you eat with bare hands
throwing another shoe in the fire
saying to the mirror:
it's the greed that's doing it
if your fingers were more satin
less stain
she wouldn't always insist
on climbing out the window

But this egg doesn't cook either
so you tape the shell back together
go back to unbuttoning
above your kitchen
below your ladder
hissing back at luck

Pincushion

Light as a feather
stiff as a board
I sat quietly
while you cracked
egg after egg
over my head
you watched, smirking
the way they slid
down my face, crushed
each of my fingernails
in the hinge of your front door
printed every picture
that you pulled from my stomach
with a long piece of wire

But now it's my turn to smirk
at the way you're still chained to that door
staring at the arms
of a body I left years ago
you know I'm a nail biter
and every bit of your blood
was chewed from my fingers
long before I wrote this

Today I spat your name
in the shower
watched it break apart
in a cloud of pink

You are the pincushion
buried in the back yard
you are the one I won't burn
because there's no reason to rush this
light as a feather
stiff as a board
can you feel every lick of this?
good.

Bobby Pin Ode

You are nobody's house pet
plier-gnarled road
smirking loop
there are two ways to travel you:
straight and oil slick
or arched back curve
ripple and repeat
luring in strands of hair
and pinching them captive

You are nobody's constant
the weight of leaving
your mark
on someone else's bedside table

You are blood metal bite
brittle on the tongue
clicking between teeth
Ms. Placed wanderer,
going silently
has never been your style

You are faulty lock pick
stubborn to bend
rubber-edged reminder
scratch in tree
name in diner booth
that I was here
rearranging myself
once before

ARTIST NAME

Building Title

AMANDA MORTON

In the Land of the Síde

The sky is barren and gray.

Flowers spring from the ground here, scattered in sweet meadows where dancing feet beat to the sound of drums in the twilight.

The people are beautiful here, tall and graceful, clad in exquisite mantles of green. They do not age, here. Their teeth gleam bright with laughter.

They graced my brow with flowers when I came. They gave me many gifts, of gold and precious gems, of three hounds with bodies white as snow and ears red as blood.

They held a feast in my honor. I ate their food and drank their drink. Their intoxicating ale is nearly as heady as the sweet winds that blow from the north, bringing the promise of sunshine.

Still, the sky is gray as stone.

Sometimes, when my mind wanders, I try to remember how I came to this land. I cannot think of it. It must have happened long ago. Sometimes I seem to remember another country, another life. It is like a dream, half real. If I put my hand through it it would stretch into dust and disintegrate. A face with two eyes looks down at me and says, "Do not go

wandering among the mounds. The barrows of the ancestors are a dangerous place to play. They live there, underground."

But then the face vanishes and the words of warning are only dewdrops on a spiderweb. I think clearly. How could such a land as beautiful and plentiful as this exist under the earth? And then I shake myself, and stretch, and all such thoughts slip from my mind.

"Where are we?" I ask once.

"Between the hills," they say.

It is a satisfying answer.

Still, it is strange how there are no visitors in this land. In my father's court visitors would pass through often.

But when I think about it I am not sure that I had a father.

Sometimes I see a flash of an image, a lighting-bolt vision. There is woman sitting on a mound. She is ancient and blind, tangled in her long gray hair. She mumbles to herself, rocking back and forth, biting at her ragged fingernails.

Every day she digs at the side of the mound, trying to get

inside. Every night the earth refills itself, undoing her work. Her shovel broke long ago. She digs with her hands.

I know they leave. I see them ride out on their tall prancing horses and vanish through the wavering curtain that guards the distance. I cannot look at it for too long or my eyes will water and my mind forgets who I am.

I have asked, once or twice, where they go.

"Out of the hills and under the sky," they say.

"Can I go too?"

They laugh. Their teeth gleam. "Why would you ever want to leave? Don't you have everything you could possibly wish for right here?"

And I laugh, too, relieved. Of course. They're right. Why would I ever want to leave a place like this?

Still, the sky is uncanny. I don't like to look at it. It feels like it is staring back at me.

And the hag, I can see her still, gibbering on the mound. She looks straight at me. I know her eyes. They are mine.



ARTIST NAME

Pen Plotter 1

13. Ears were largely unnecessary; the sound of the woods was quiet itself. Marcy was glad she could do without them. It had been hard when she lost the left ear first, because she had been forced to walk around in circles, the weight of her other ear tipping her head permanently to the right. Her mother, offended that her daughter kept looking at her cock-eyed, had receded into the forest as the mist at dawn. But now both ears were gone, and her head felt much lighter. The sky didn't make her want to vomit anymore; in fact, she felt like she was able to float closer to it, and let in a little more of its blueness. It was only when she became aware of someone gazing at her from the ground that she felt the sad need to come back down.

14. They were to TELL THE SLEEPWALKER WHAT THEY DID, Ian remembered. This was one of Marcy's only requests. She felt it would make the nights less lonely for both of them, and he was starting to see her point. Watching someone fall asleep is like watching someone walk away; after a while, they're too distant to see clearly. Telling each other their sleepwalking stories was an effort to imagine these nights as an experience they both were present for, ones that they shared. Even so, he wasn't sure how he was going to tell her this: her, crouched and clutching her ears tightly, screaming her head off. As he tried to think of some less concerning alternative he could recount in the morning, he forgot to ask the obvious question: how it was that she wasn't waking herself up.

15. This rule wasn't exactly what she had in mind. She would have preferred: TELL THE WATCHER WHAT YOU DREAMED. But she wasn't sure how to express her need for this, except for the weird explanation that being in a dream can be just as isolating as being awake. Nor was she sure that Ian would find it valuable or necessary. She thus conceded that the rule as it stood was fine; there were many ways of being alone.

16. You are very beautiful in your sleep, Ian told her over breakfast. Marcy was so tired that, as she added milk to her cereal, she was tempted to tip the whole carton into the bowl and let it overflow; she wouldn't have to exert the effort of carefully pouring, and at least then the bowl would be full. You're too lovely, she told him. She thought for a moment, and felt the carton becoming heavier as its milk emptied out. What, exactly, did she look like? she asked. Ian looked down, stirred his fourth cup of coffee. Peaceful, he said. You look peaceful. No I don't, Marcy said. Ian raised his eyebrows and smiled. How would you know? he asked. Because I don't sleep peacefully, she said. You read the articles, the entire cause of sleepwalking is that something is disrupting your sleep. Well, he admitted, there have been times where you may have been fitful. But who am I to say what's going on in your head? Her Lucky Charms floated in an opaque sea. Something feels wrong in my dreams, Marcy said. It feels like somebody's watching me. He laughed and said: well, isn't there?

17. Later, when she started crying on the train, Ian put his arm around her and told her it was OK, she would be alright, but she shouldn't let the dream be real. Marcy couldn't help but feel this was the opposite of what she wanted to hear. The dream was real. When she closed her eyes, her eyes fluttered rapidly behind her eyelids and her neurons fired; these were the makings of her dreams, but they were also facts. Other facts: she wanted to follow her mother, she wanted to rise off the hills as fog. If you could call a nightmare by its name, and say that it's the fickle creation of a fearful mind, couldn't you choose not to have it at all? She glanced at an old woman seated across from them staring intently into a brown paper bag. Ian's arm hung limply on her shoulder. Nobody could choose not to have nightmares, Marcy decided, and stood up, claiming she wanted to stretch her legs.

20. With little other means of recourse, Ian turned again to Google. He observed her behavior as closely as he could, so that his search terms would be precise. That night was simple: "pacing between walls and touching them repeatedly." None of the usual hits from the National Sleep Foundation or Sleep Journal came up. Instead, the first result was a Wikipedia page on the ritual practices of Scientology. The pacing in particular was one of two things. Either it was a form of trance, in which by focusing on the confines of the room for extended periods of time, the Scientologist could conceptually master, then overcome, the limitations of space, consciousness, and the body. Or it was a method of torture, in which a prisoner was made to fixate on the impossibility of escape. For a while Ian wondered which one she was enacting, and whether they amounted to the same kind of failure. Then he just felt grateful that she wasn't a Scientologist.

22. Of all the things she wanted to tell him, but couldn't, the most tragic by far was this: if your eyes are lifeless enough, and your shuffle convincing enough, the right pharmacist will basically offer you Ambien on the house. Ian would have been on the floor laughing, if he was there. As it was, however, he was just plain on the floor.

23. Marcy put a pillow under Ian's head, blew out the candles, and left quickly. She believed the dosage was enough to sedate most physical movement, but she locked the door behind her, just in case. It was only until after she got in her car that she realized she had never chosen where she wanted to sleepwalk alone. There were only so many solitary places in the city. As she stared blankly at her dashboard, trying to think of a direction to drive, she slowly remembered something her mother had told her when she was a little girl. Her mother, who had grown up out in the country, always looked for a way to beat the light pollution after she moved into the city. She found that she could more closely replicate her childhood's night sky if she was on a up on a high roof, way above the man-made lights below. It is the privilege of being on our tiny rock, she told Marcy, that we can fall asleep seeing so many stars. Marcy got out of her car and started walking down 4th Avenue, looking for fire escapes.

24. What she had forgotten on the ground was that, beyond the cloud level, the sky is always clear. Now she and her mother only knew this in terms of a reversed and happy vertigo, an infinite up. But she was sure it was beautiful too. In a way, she wished he could have seen it.



home panels 1-4 Frannie Logan

12. She wished he had written the rule DON'T HAVE SEX WITH THE SLEEPWALKER and resented the possibility that she she would have to write it herself. She had considered bringing this up with him, but she felt this would compound the shame of her resentment, as if she did not trust that they had trust Ian moved on to the hand towels

19. All that was left was her skin retaining its shape. Even that was subjective, which was part of the problem. She could not see, she didn't have eyes, but she still sensed somebody on the ground calling the flying pile of flesh a girl. She wished he would try calling her other things: a sheep, maybe, or an oncoming storm. She wished he wouldn't call her anything, really. Her path moved across the sun, and she cast a long shadow where she thought he was standing. At this, she rippled with pleasure.

21. On Ian's next night to watch her, he decided that what Marcy really needed was a bubble bath. A little rest and relaxation. For somebody who could have neither, it felt a bit like a farce, but Ian was willing to entertain the possibility that it could actually be romantic. Her, lulled (hopefully) by the enveloping warmth. Him, sitting by her side, holding her hair so her head stayed above the water. They could even light candles, he told her, as long as he could keep her away from any open flame. She smiled, said she adored the idea, and handed him a cup of tea. So we can both relax, she told him as they took their first sip. Ian's cup wasn't halfway empty before he collapsed, which lead Marcy to believe that he was much more tired than even she had planned for.

2. Marcy's mother wanted to photograph the woods, and Marcy knew you couldn't do that in November, the trees were too bare and the landscape would come out looking like a thick haze. But she couldn't tell her that because her mouth was gone, and besides, she was tired. Her mother extended the legs of her tripod. More sky or more trees? she asked, and added, in the composition I mean. The sky was eggshell blue and large. Marcy wanted to vomit under it, and wondered where that vomit would go if it didn't come out from where her mouth should have been. She tugged at her mother's sleeves as she convulsed. Sorry honey, I need to keep this steady, her mother said, and began nailing the tripod into the earth with wooden pegs. You never answered my question, she said. Marcy pointed up to the sky, her shaking hands following the path of birds circling. Her mother prepared her impossible picture.

3. One of the benefits of being a sleepwalking couple, Marcy had realized, was never experiencing your partner getting up in the middle of the night. That feeling is especially bad when she was just starting out, when she went over to his apartment and was still memorizing the thread count of his sheets. Sooner or later he'd have to go to the bathroom, she realized, but when it finally happened, she still counted the seconds she spent alone in an unfamiliar bed, staring up at the ceiling until he got back and she could pretend this was a kind of home again.

4. A downside of being in a sleepwalking couple was that he doesn't come back. Another was that she didn't feel him get up, either, hardly felt her own body lifting itself out of bed. She still woke up alone

Tell the Watcher What You Dreamed

One of the window-washers watching

she screamed and pulled her close.

ble off the edge. He grabbed her as

her sudden fear. Marcy would turn-

7. Ian instinctively believed that, in

might bring a person peace.

world, waking up to that much blue

clear. It was sad, almost. In another

and Ian's view of the sky was entirely

over the sun. But from the roof, Marcy

have seen her reaching fingers passing

the top floor windows, they might

low that, if somebody looked out of

against her side. Her arm swung so

hanging out of bed. Ian was pressed

times liked to sleep with one arm

ledge, in fact, because Marcy some-

apartment building. Right up on the

er, a week later, on the roof of Ian's

6. Ironically, they did wake up togeth-

and her clothes tumbling violently, her

her belly looked like a paper

weight barrel, enough to hold

and his carpal. Occasionally the wind

west, his eyebrows as that. He followed

of the canal. Occasionally the wind

other dress but with her arms lying

and her clothes tumbling violently, her

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5. One an isolated incident, they had thought. Or
 best in a state of isolated incidents. Wasn't I thinking the old
 each other. They were a perfect somnambulists.
 crossed the night. A dream couple. El caca. Nether.
 them admitted that this had never happened to them
 but did they say that their relationship scared them. Because that
 meant that their relationships weren't supposed to do
 sure relationships weren't supposed to do. So, I heard Ian
 mean on the neck and told her that she clearly acts
 Marcy sleep. And Marcy laughed and asked so, why are
 aren't sleeping.

8. The scariest thing about clouds is that they have no shape at all, Marcy thought, looking up. Her mother put the last twig on the pile of kindling. Stand clear, honey, she shouted from the treeline. You could look up at a cloud and think that it's a sheep or a vagina or something, but you'd be kidding yourself. It's all just water that got stuck on its way to being water again. Her mother lit a match and placed it on the fire, then began to take off her clothes and add each item to the growing flames. Marcy had never seen her mother naked. She suspected that this was something daughters were supposed to already have done, or rather, have already witnessed. Perhaps it was her time to witness this, standing there where the smoke could choke her if she had a mouth or nose. But she didn't know what her

9. They were reading the WebMD article rather quickly, but one line in particular caught their attention: the sleepwalker might quietly walk around his room, or else he might run and attempt to "escape." The quotation marks were a small but noticeable comfort. To keep from dozing off, they researched symptoms late into the night. Reading scientific journals on sleep, they realized, was not the easiest way to stay awake. Nowhere did any of the articles mention sleepwalking shared between couples. The closest they got was an assertion that sleep deprivation could be a collective experience if both parties chronically snored. Both of them separately accepted that this sealed their fate as a freak-show couple; neither of them snored. In the early days they had listened to each other sleeping, while they still could. What they thought they heard was each other's breath, quieter than the sound of the outside seeping through the window. What they actually heard was the sound of each other listening.

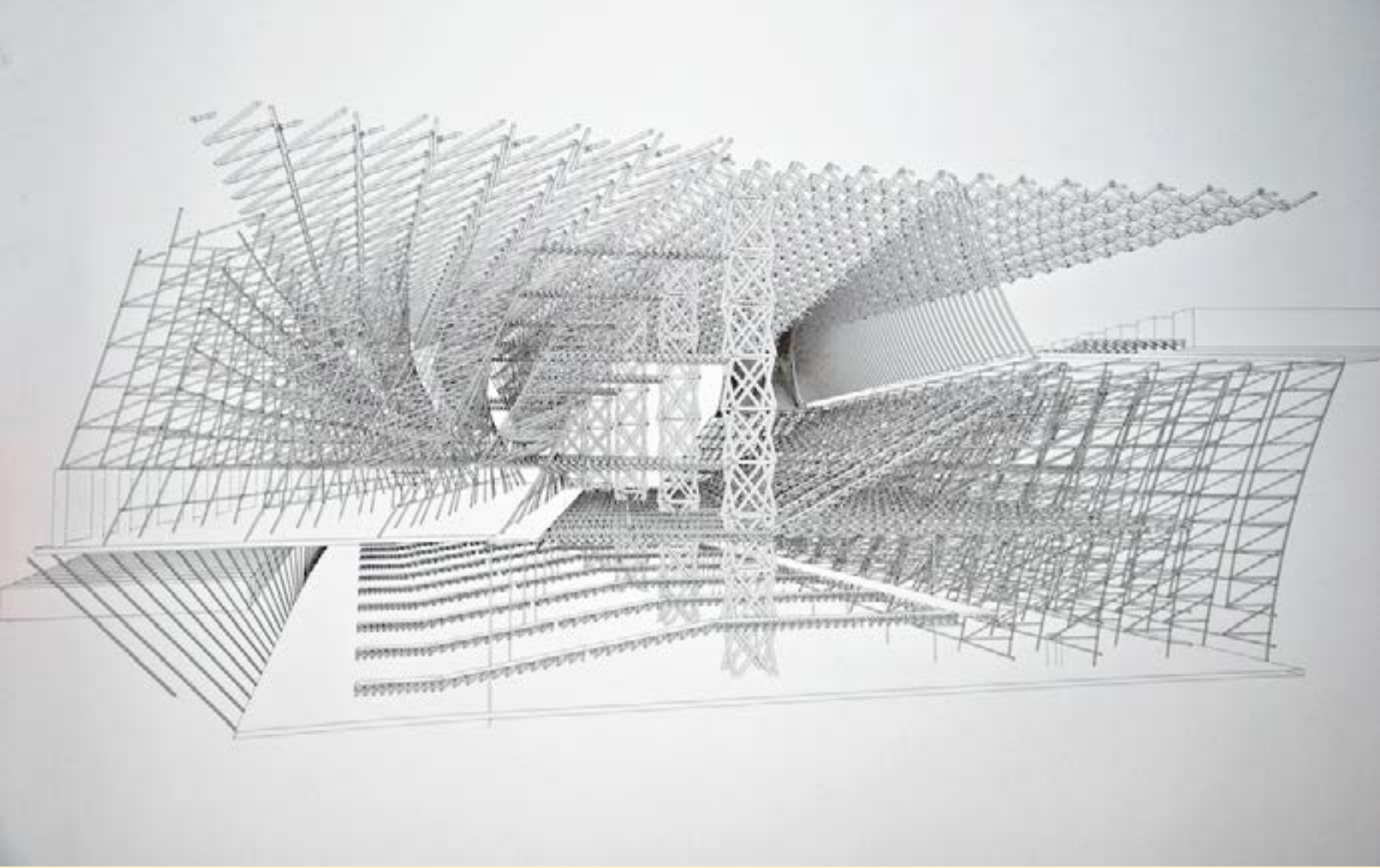
10. Ian thought their situation called for rules. He wrote down some possibilities one night while Marcy attempted to order coffee in bulk. The first was "DON'T TELL ANYBODY." Luckily, they hadn't yet, as their problem started as an inconsequential embarrassment and had rapidly become too X-Files for comfort. Unable to have real nightmares during his sleepless nights, Ian instead fretted over their ending up in intensive clinical trial, or worse, the news cycle. We have to sleep, though, Marcy said. For one thing, I don't trust the caffeine content of coffee sold in mass quantities. And not sleeping will kill us. He reminded her that sleepwalking in front of an errant taxi would do the same, much more quickly. Marcy paused, thinking. What if there was a way we could have both? she said. Both ways of dying? he asked. No, she said, both being able to sleep and being able to live. Ian rubbed his eyes and worried that she was closer to sleep than he was, but then he looked at her again and worried that she was much more awake.

11. Marcy watched as Ian touched every surface in the apartment. How the hell is he keeping track of this in his sleep? she thought. By the third time he touched the refrigerator handle, she had realized two things: that he wasn't, and that he had wrote most of the rules of their sleepwalking engagement. This was not to say she disagreed with them. KEEP EACH OTHER ALIVE was fairly indisputable. So was the basic TAKE TURNS BEING AWAKE, and the injunction to CAUSE A SCENE IF NECESSARY. This included tackling and carrying what could be a potentially belligerent boyfriend, according to her further studies on WebMD. Ian always lingered at the stove and toaster; he seemed to be attracted to metal that retained earlier warmth. Trickier, she thought, was the safety measure IF YOU ARE ABOUT TO FALL ASLEEP, WAKE THE SLEEPWALKER. Because they could only sleep half of what they used to, they both were so tired that they wanted to sleep all the time. What, then, was keeping them from waking the sleeper and sleeping themselves? Was it empathy? Or was it simply that this was the only sustainable way, the only protection of their mutual hope that soon, they too would have their turn?

(continued on reverse)



I — Il — scared of the nite
 Nicole Cochany



ARTIST NAME

Pen Plotter 3



ARTIST NAME

Photo Title 1

LAUREN SUKIN

The House

1. It was almost dark beyond the walls of the living room, and we were sitting there together: the small plant that was growing bigger inside my veins and you and myself. There were only seventeen people at the New Year's party, but I couldn't remember who among them had invited us. The little plant just kept chugging and I held a wine glass between my thumb and my forefinger like a card at the end of a magic trick. The plant sighed. Yeah, we met in college, a girl told me and looked at you. I thought he was brilliant because he could quote just about any philosopher you've ever heard of. Ain't that something, I replied. Turns out they're all just tidbits from Calvin and Hobbs. But yeah. We're really happy together. The plant wrapped its tendrils around my liver, squeezed.

Looks flitted between ex-lovers, one girl tottered on her heels, had to sit on the couch while her wine wore off. I asked her what her name was. Does it matter? She said. I guess not, I said. I admired the grandfather clock. I admired the silk painting. I poked at hors d'oeuvres with a toothpick. The plant stayed quiet; it was bedtime; it was sleeping. The nervous host dropped a plate of sweet potatoes on someone's toes. I helped because I had nothing else to do. I took the remnants of the glass tray back to the kitchen and licked the edges.

Every New Year's Eve, I have trouble sleeping. I knew I would probably stay up all night. I would probably stay up all year. I'd make pancakes in the morning. I'd buy myself a good book, a new pair of sunglasses. The clock

drifted on, and the plant shivered. It had lost almost all of its leaves. It looked like a shaved poodle. It looked pitiful. I thought about putting it down. I thought about buying it a coat. It sulked, and its roots grasped for something in my lungs to hold on to.

What's your resolution? you asked me, when midnight had come and gone. Your tongue is bleeding, you said, after the obligatory kiss. Did I bite it?

2.

I knew that I could not undo this mistake. I had pulled the flesh already off the bones, checked that it had turned the correct color of pink before I would squeeze lemon over the remnants of its body and wonder whether it had ever had friends, or if it was capable of such a thing, anyway. I had already slid the knife against the grain of its scales, before I tossed the fish in the trashcan and opened up the refrigerator.

The mistake was really that he had sent me only photographs of the house in the first place, since a picture does not accurately represent how rooms can feel like quiet, grumbling giants, and empty bookshelves can wonder whether the inhabitants that swirl around them have ever learned anything at all except how to cook salmon and watch television and leave sticky notes on the front door with messages like "umbrella & thumbtacks" or "Stewarts coming at 7."

On Mondays we played dominos. Our daughter wasn't old enough

that we could tell her not to cheat, but her father would rearrange the game back to fairness when she would get up to refill her glass of milk or look out the window or ask again where her goldfish had gone to. Mommy, can fish become ghosts? she said one night. Yes, said her father, that's why you shouldn't waste water when you brush your teeth. Otherwise the fish will haunt you. Later, when I tucked her into bed, I whispered that fish couldn't really become ghosts. Daddy had just been joking. Later, when I tucked myself into bed, I crossed my fingers and hoped that the ghost of the salmon wasn't haunting my bathtub. If it had been, though, I would have been okay with it.

3.

I have nightmares. One is about an antelope on the dining room table. I draw it furiously, night after night, for fear it will disappear. One is about the water in my shower turning to oil. I blame it on the salt. Restaurants these days. In one, all the houses are balsa wood. All the townsfolk taste like cardboard; they all own paper pets with ribbons around the necks. In another, F.T. Marinetti steals all my good pairs of socks. Norman Mailer brings all but one back. When I am not sleeping, I am contemplating writing a novel. It would be about a woman in a cutting room, working with bits of time instead of film. She weaves stories as she likes. In another, a lifeguard drowns with the final thought: Of all the bad habits in the world, my girl had to bite her fingernails. She goes under without a struggle. The third is little more than stock market

advice, all of it gathered from overhead conversations in the elevators of hospitals. Anyone is an expert these days.

4.

My mother told me there were only three things to look out for: people who think everybody is important, people who are actually important, and the kind of people who would believe that you are important. Then she gave me a glass of lemonade and we looked up at the sun together, our lips pursed. The weather sure is nice, I said. Yup, she replied. And that's just about all you need to know about that.

Nowadays I think her advice was often more self-indulgent than it was helpful, but I sure learned how to cut grass and bake snickerdoodles, paint my lips and the rest of a house, fall in love and get something out of it. Now I possess a small repertoire of potable skills, of which bringing things upon myself is only one. That's what she said to me, too, when the sun stopped shining and the whole marriage was over. You brought this upon yourself.

AMANDA MORTON

In the Land of the Side

The sky is barren and gray.
Flowers spring from the ground here, scattered in sweet meadows
where dancing feet beat to the sound of drums in the twilight.

The people are beautiful here, tall and graceful, clad in exquisite
mantles of green. They do not age here. Their teeth gleam bright
with laughter.
They grazed my brow with flowers when I came. They gave me
many gifts, of squalid and precious gems, of three hounds with bodies
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They hold a feast in my honor. I ate their food and drank their drink.
Their intoxicating ale is nearly as heady as the sweet winds that blow
from the north, bringing the promise of sunshine.
Still, the sky is gray as stone.
Sometimes, when my mind wanders, I try to remember how I came
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like a dream, half real. If I put my hand through it it would stretch
into dust and disintegrate. A face with two eyes looks down at me
and says, "Do not go wandering among the mounds. The barrows of
the ancestors are a dangerous place to play. They live there, under-

ground."
But then the face vanishes and the words of warning are only
dewdrops on a spiderweb. I think clearly. How could such a land as
beautiful and plentiful as this exist under the earth? And then I shake
myself, and stretch, and all such thoughts slip from my mind.
"Where are we?" I ask once.
"Between the hills," they say.
It is a satisfying answer.

Still, it is strange how there are no visitors in this land. In my father's
court visitors would pass through often.
But when I think about it I am not sure that I had a father.
Sometimes I see a flash of a image, a lightning-bolt vision. There is
a woman sitting on a mound. She is ancient and blind, tangled in her
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DENNIS KRAWEC

Krawec 1

long gray hair. She mumbles to herself, rocking back and forth, biting
at her ragged fingernails.
Every day she digs at the side of the mound, trying to get inside. Eve-
ry night the earth refills itself, undoing her work. Her shovel broke
long ago. She digs with her hands.

I know they leave. I see them ride out on their tall prancing horses
and vanish through the wavering curtain chair guards the distance.
I cannot look at it for too long or my eyes will water and my mind
forgets who I am.
I have asked, once or twice, where they go.
"Out of the hills and under the sky," they say.
"Can I go too?"

They laugh. Their teeth gleam. "Why would you ever want to leave?
Don't you have everything you could possibly wish for right here?"
And I laugh, too, relieved. Of course. They're right. Why would I
ever want to leave a place like this?

Still, the sky is uncanny. I don't like to look at it. It feels like it is
staring back at me.
And the hags. I can see her still, gibbering on the mound. She looks
straight at me. I know her eyes. They are mine.

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advice, all of it gathered from overhead conversations in the elevators of hospitals. Anyone is an expert these

DENNIS KRAWEC

Krawec 3



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The House

1.
It was almost dark beyond the walls of the living room, and we were sitting there together: the small plant
that was growing bigger inside my veins and you and myself. There were only seventeen people at the New
Year's party, but I couldn't remember my veins and my forefinger like a card at the end of a magic trick. The
and I held a wine glass between my thumb and my forefinger like a card at the end of a magic trick. The
he could quote just about any philosopher you've ever heard of. Ain't that something, I replied. Turns out
they're all just tidbits from Calvin and Hobbes. But yeah. We're really happy together. The plant wrapped its
tendrils around my liver, squeezed.
Looks flitted between ex-lovers, one girl rotered on her back, had to sit on the couch while her
wine wore off. I asked her what her name was. Does it matter? She said, I guess not, I said. I admired the
grandfather clock. I admired the silk painting. I poked at hors d'oeuvres with a toothpick. The plant stayed
I helped because I had nothing else to do. I took the remnants of the glass tray back to the kitchen and licked
the edges.
Every New Year's Eve, I have trouble sleeping. I knew I would probably stay up all night. I would
showered. The clock drifted on, and the plant shivered. It had lost almost all of its leaves. A new pair of
and its roots grasped for something in my lungs to hold on to.
What's your resolution? you asked me, when midnight had come and gone. Your tongue is bleeding,
you said, after the obligatory kiss. Did I bite it?

2.
I knew that I could not undo this mistake. I had pulled the flesh already off the bones, checked that it had
turned the correct color of pink before I would squeeze lemon over the remnants of its body and wonder
whether it had ever had friends, or if it was capable of such a thing, anyway. I had already slid the knife
against the grain of its scales, before I tossed the fish in the trashcan and opened up the refrigerator.
The mistake was really that he had sent me only photographs of the house in the first place, since
except how to cook salmon and watch television and leave sticky notes on the front door with messages like
"umbrella & thumbtacks" or "Stewarts coming at 7."
On Mondays we played dominos. Our daughter wasn't old enough that we could tell her not to cheat,
but her father would rearrange the game back to fairness when she would get up to refill her glass of milk or
one night. Yes, said her father, that's why you shouldn't waste water when you brush your teeth. Otherwise
the fish will haunt you. Later, when I tucked her into bed, I whispered that fish couldn't really become
ghosts. Daddy had just been joking. Later, when I tucked myself into bed, I crossed my fingers and hoped
that the ghost of the salmon wasn't haunting my bathtub. If it had been, though, I would have been okay
with it.

