

Poems from *Tilt Me and I Bend*

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HYPNOS BLUE

To you I surrender my body,
with the crashing of overripe mangoes
bursting upon impact with earth. I offer

my shattered heart, my skin revised
by tongues, my fingers on edge
like they've always been and waiting.

Shackle my restless feet, stop them
from wandering. Arrest my stubborn
hiccups, collect the empty envelopes

of my memory and fill them
with jungle dreams. Gather me from
your midnight brew of man-musk

and the wreck of storms. Make me forget
how we weaponize our tongues
into engines of ecstasy, the way

Renoir allegedly painted his women
with his phallus, the way my eyes undress
someone else's lover. The way touch

can kill. Summon my circadian rhythm
back from its night shifts, abduct me
from the lure of these white pages

in all their welcoming vacancies. Shush me,
shush me good. I need to stop
feeling wrong. I need to unlearn

this resistance to abandon. End the tentative,
please; now I'm all yours.
Tonight, to you, I surrender my body.

AGENDA

I will be spared from all this,
I will have lost my wits.
drooling on my crotch.
pursue passers-by. Very likely
I will fall silent, or burst
of pimple-red expletives.
interval to realize
all over, all the way down.
The reception will be mutual.
do nothing. Say nothing
I want to get married,
wearing nothing but post-its.
imagine a levitating spoon
I, old child of the rain, the lost
with neglected
I will endure to wait for
those nights all the strangers

grow old without knowing it.
Sitting at a bus stop,
I will blabber to the wind,
will nuns trigger something,
into tears, or run with a trail
I will be granted one lucid
how my hair had gone white,
Old friends won't recognize me.
They will see it coming,
when I announce
and show up at the altar
I will open my mouth,
coming aboard the spaceship.
rivulet. I, plucking nose hair
fingernails. I, the unclaimed.
the prophecy from the Moon
will leave me alone.

THE WIFE

And when you are gone, I am
body again.

The man in white
or the man in red
comes over, and I am just body
again.

It takes place twice a month,
before I change the sheets.

This morning:
sweat of another man
in the laundry.

Last night:
we flapped together
like a pair of wings.

Roses stolen at a party remain
stiff black
under the leaking faucet
the landlord hasn't fixed.

The man in white
or the man in red
can't fix me.

Men I cannot love
leave me alone with the lamps on.
They vanish somewhere else.

I ask them anyway
and they don't ask about the roses.
They don't ask about you,

but I ask them anyway.

And baby I could swallow a pillow.
I do not have to beg.

BY THE FISHERMAN'S GRIEF

You might think he has fallen asleep
standing, or hypnotized by the pendulum
of waves. But he doesn't have to move his eyes

to catch the line of glimmer on the horizon,
to note the direction of his boat drifting
abandoned. Daylight is certain of the absence

of two fingers from his right hand. On his left,
a gas lamp, which minutes ago made his shadow
dance to the urging sound of water.

He has been waiting for that sound to come,
any sound, waiting for his hearing to surface
above the silence that drowned him deaf

when the dam of his eardrums gave way
to the ocean. His wife whispers, or shouts,
whatever it is that makes his knees heavy

enough to strike the sand with a thud
only one of them can hear. She points to
the returning fishermen, or their boats loaded

with heavy catch, and before he knows it
she is gone. He starts recalling, one by one,
the mermaid stories he had once forsaken

altogether. His was no longer a generation
of faith, or superstitions. But before dawn,
after pushing his boat out to the waves,

he submerged his head underwater,
for he heard voices from beneath him,
calling, the first sound he believed

in years. He knows where he must go.
The legends have it all mapped out for him.
He drops his lamp and walks into the sea.

BLACK DOG

I am an old woman opening
the fridge, asking my husband,
What would you like to have for dinner.

He doesn't answer because he is dead.
Heart attack, cancer, stroke,
one early morning accident involving cars

and amputations, or a plane crash,
where he wakes up just in time
to be fully alive inside the bright heat

exploding—the black thoughts keep coming back,
sneaking up, because they are addicted
to my consciousness.

I am waiting for his answer,
or else walking around our bungalow
in this dark suburb, calling his name

because the gutters need replacing,
the toilet won't flush,
and we need more dog food

for the dog long dead.