

Burnt October

Katherine Soniat

1.
diaries my declawed
denatured brushes with intimacy
2.
ashen frayed
words centered on *not*
3.
we began (and finished)
as a question in part
4.
point of origin (perfectly) limited
 half-life of two
5.
assumed if at first we couldn't we can't
6.
and you saying *of course*
I know it (every bit) excuse my territorial insult
7.
equidistant parallel lives
without end
8.
stop/go/wait another few
years
9.
who's to move squirm leave
10.
our house partitioned (postwar) entity

11.
tissue shaved from the congested we

12.
listening *time for what's said* whoever
heard that heard wrong

13.
blame taking/at root

14.
given we're all we know
small private selections

15.
subtexts contradict squabble
hey now, say that again

16.
talk
not a sunlit (pre)occupation

17.
I am logistically
that am I

18.
time's up the bottom line

19.
dawn crimson smeared waking
sleep a way out

20.
term for not-wonder *you* in italics

21.
another dizzying rejoinder billows

22.

your proverbial ship coming almost
not quite

23.

sailing silently sailing

24.

red-rimmed stomped on horizon

25.

who's to jump ship star-crossed threshold

26.

numerical fact two proven impossibilities you
me

27.

chalk it up figures screech on the blackboard

28.

crosshairs steady calibrate
really how could you have done

29.

did it

30.

versions vermilion revisions
catch fire flit

31.

October about the end
ghost mouth at the window moist

Easter Inventory

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*Easter falling on the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox
allowed nomadic pilgrims enough light to travel by.*

Stillness in the moonlit mirrors—
one marked *out*, the other

deeper into wander.

Hunger and fast fill the blue emptiness
of 4 a.m. Who am I to question space

in someone else's double bed, sectioned off
for me and god knows what next phantom?

Coyote howls in the desert. Half asleep,
I mumble, *wily move*, drawn to the tremors

of another.

*

Drought, and magpies fly through the cottonwoods—
carnival magic on a stick, these raucous birds in black

and white. Two magpies are hand-painted on the sheet
beneath my pillow,

mythic birds of happiness flattened
on pale linen.

Footsteps under the window at night tell me the neighbor's
at it again. Humming, she hoses the wither called her garden.

A tale, I think, is due this dark lady—the one that ends,
*And, as always, thirty thirsty magpies peck apart
 the sleepless creature and her fat hose of desert water.*

*

Sitting in the backyard with paint-charts and a glass of beer,
I wonder how long that crow can blow about on the branch,

and not fly away. A young Korean lilac roots in arid soil,
crow flickers in the leaves, and the air's so dry it glitters,

my eyes so parched, they're hard to close. At sunset, I give
the birdbath two cups of water and a chunk of quartz carried

back from the canyon switchback. In town, the drummer calls
the hungry in for supper. There'll be no crow to judge when this

branch is empty, and I return to the shifting shades between
ocean cloud and *deep seashell*.

*

If the National Wildlife Fund hadn't sent me the stuffed barn-owl
as a thank-you for my donation, I might not recognize what's calling

from the tree. But I had squeezed that bird each night so my cat could
hear its *who-whoos*, two short then two long.

Now an owl filled
with breath echoes at twilight. Vociferous kin, this bird whose fund-
raising twin slept with my cat for months in a house only feet from
the Eastern Divide. You think this an exaggeration?
I know how far sound travels.

*

April on the back road to the Penitentes Cemetery where the dusty
lilacs bloom. By evening the stacked mailboxes are empty, and

beneath them, the napping dog takes time-out to chase a passing car,
or two. Most slow down, used to Suzie's habits. Quite a different

response from the sign nailed every three feet on the fence ahead:
NO TRESPASSING!!! There's even a huge one in red propped

against the chimney. As I walk by, a boy yells from the upstairs window, *hey lady, we own this road you know*. The holy land

he calls it, though in both directions folks walk home with groceries. I grin, pick lilacs through his fence for Suzie's rhinestone collar,

then drop photos from my folder of the big black crucifix this side
of Pueblo land and Sacred Mountain. In dream that night, my plane

careens towards chimneys, then suddenly floats to a stop over Suzie asleep in the dust.

*

Four windows of the chapel are boarded up, and it's hard to find a door or to get the story straight about who first crucified the natives—

the long line of penitents begun who would flay themselves for countless holy weeks into the future.

Yesterday when asked about the term *morado*, the cab driver looked straight at me, and said this was not his people's language, and drove a whole lot faster.

Behind the chapel there's the crucifix and outhouse with three holes
in a rotted plank of wood. Count the years
backwards to when the body finally was nailed up and men emptied
their stomachs under an Easter moon.