



Danaus Plexippus Plexippus

Teresa Chuc Dowell

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Contents

Cashews	4
Maps	5
Evolution	6
Walking Stick	7
Blue Lion	8
L'art D'aimer	9
Intimacy	10
How Chopsticks were Invented	11
Bike Accident	12
Resourcefulness	13
Acknowledgments	14

Cashews

Edible moon
Two crescents stuck together
Though the moon outside
Is whole and blue! Tonight
I have my half circles
Little, tasty smiles
On New Year's eve
A swing's upward path
Held between my index finger
And thumb
A small boat on the lake
Of my tongue
Disappears one by one
Above – a full moon
made of a cashew
Split into two

Maps

Pieces of broken crackers – the geometry of the United States.
Your finger traces a blue highway along the Atlantic coast and pauses at periods.
I seek out circled stars on a page and name them,
find vast open green spaces and cities within a centimeter of white paper -
to journey back in time and hear stories.
My hand lifts an entire state and turns it over
to where it continues on the other side.
I lie here on your bed looking at maps
Thinking – *Travel me, enter my capital.*
Your heart – a matrix,
womb from where
everything grows.

Evolution: *Danaus plexippus plexippus*

Taking into its body the reason for its
survival - its ability to live with poison
and become it
a monarch flickers its orange and black
lashes on a milkweed stem
tongue uncurling to drink the poisonous
white sap
it takes a bird once
to learn the lesson in eating a
Monarch
How we survive: alchemize our poisons
into milky white sap that sustains us
Spread our patterned wings and be
harbinger – of flowers,
plant, food and
water

Walking Stick

phasmida - olive green like leaves and limb
how nice it is to be an apparition,
to be apparently not there.
How the branches jangle in a slight breeze,
a moving fragment buoys a bouquet of leaves
with such a yearning to be tree.

Indistinguishable by a bird's eye,
maneuvering by night,
chewing shedded skin, leaving no trace.
Silently shifting among the shuffling,

quiet against walls, still as furniture.
My antennae perceives static.
I have inhabited this earth for so long
that I blend into sidewalks,
billboards, magazines, t.v. shows.
Voices imperceptible from one another,
camouflaged.
How I wish, for once, to be pecked,
to detach a limb from a beak in my escape
because of my uniqueness.

Blue Lion

We measure air's history from a tube
stuck through the heart of a blue lion.
Watching as it enters the silence of stones
in metal spirals, anticipating what centuries of ice can tell us;
we are transient yet leave much behind
and rise in the clarity of glass.
What is invisible, imperceptible is captured
in an air bubble and preserved like a gesture.
What two hands have fused is instantly universal
and we watch the birds for affirmations or forebodings.
We look for replies in the stomachs and on the slick black
and white coats of emperors.
We are agitated as chunks collapse into ocean.
We are both of water
and we both hang by a thread.

L'art D'aimer

from the perspective of Baltimore Orioles

First are the songs - a composition of whistles and rattles. *You always hear an oriole before you see one.* Then copulation; black and orange ruffles in leaves. They find a branch high above the ground to weave a bag. Pieces of plastic strips, strings, branches, grass, one by one in the beak, mixes with saliva. In the building and in its intent is nest and what is to come afterwards - eggs, hatchlings helpless and blind, throats stretched out in a choral for food. Insect legs dangle from a parent's beak. The younglings will soon leave the nest with a nudge off the edge - the first time wings are used to convince air of its ability. Between two elm trunks vertical and black - bird in sky is an absolute.

Intimacy

The sky is the color of hydrangea;
blanched clouds and shades of purple-blue,
a touch of pink-flushed petals here and there.
Hydrangea in morning sun and afternoon shade
where thoughts like winged insects alight
on a cluster of forty-three blossoms.
Blossoms that color according to the aluminum
or lack of the metal in the soil.

How Chopsticks Were Invented

Against a backdrop of sunset,
two reed-like legs are dipped into water.
Snake-like neck swings back
then forward like a sword
and catches a small fish
between its beaks.
Anyone who folds a thousand cranes
will receive their hearts' desire.
At the table, a woman's arm
is a neck in its loose white sleeve.
Rice, chicken, broccoli carried
on the tip of chopsticks.

Bike Accident

My closest encounter with a rose
bush was when I crashed into one.
While a child and riding my bike,
I thought I would challenge myself –
pedal fast, let go of my feet and hands.
Then, I lost control and went straight into
a rose bush. The bike on top of me, thorns
in my body. Flesh cut and bleeding.
The rose entered my bloodstream
and eyelids scattered over me.
I guess it was then, as when Peter Parker was
bitten by a spider and became Spiderman–when I became a poet.

Resourcefulness

Santa Catalina Island in Soloman Islands Archipelago

The fisherman finds a strong spider web,
wraps the silk around a stick.
He paddles out in a wooden boat
to catch needle fish,
the fish that can't be caught with a hook,
because its mouth is too narrow.
For centuries this is how it is done.
In the waters,
he takes out a small, black kite,
slips the wound web off the stick,
and ties it on the kite string.
The wind carries the kite up into the sky.
The glob of web bobs like an insect
across the water.
The fisherman holds the kite's string in his mouth.
When the kite drops, the fish is ensnared;
sharp teeth and rough scales are trapped in the web.
And the fisherman slowly pulls the string
towards him.
The needle fish moves its hips and swims in the
clear water.
The fisherman lifts the fish up,
flickering for a moment in the sunlight.
Holds it gently in his hand,
places the narrow mouth of the fish
in his mouth sideways and slides off the web.
Places the fish next to the pile of fish on
the boat's floor.

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