

Basilisk

Or: Pearl Practices Guitar and Hallucinates the Future

The Monarchs are concluding their final migration. I view this through the electric blue eyes of a lamb in a respirator mask. Resting for a spell on a high ridge, she cuts the engine of her dirtbike and removes her goggles to take in the terrible spectacle. A half million butterflies, lost and poisoned, are descending chaotically over McDowell County, West Virginia. Seeking the salt and amino acids necessary for their physiological processes, they mud-puddled in contaminated gullies at a superfund site off Old Highway 119 in Dayhoit, Kentucky. National Electric Coil Company operated a repair facility there from 1951 to '87, rewinding electric motors, manufacturing coils, and using 'volatile organic compounds' to remove tar and oil from mining machinery. For thirty-six years the chemical waste they generated was discharged directly into the soil and spewed into the Cumberland River. No one thought to test the wells until 1989. In Mexican yesteryears, the Oyamel firs in the highland forests surrounding Anganguero could become so laden with overwintering Monarchs that thick branches would snap under the weight. The rustling of these bivouacs mimicked the soft sibilance of rain. Locals would fashion altars known as *ofrendas*, upon which they would leave dishes of water and candles and marigolds and sugar skulls, believing this teeming kaleidoscope of mythic insects to be a torrent carrying souls of dead relatives and loved ones. But in Central Appalachia, where an impassive lamb bears weary witness to extinction, the gray waste offers up its many horrors on improvised altars of roadkill bones. A great big bunch of bugs croaking at once barely registers when hypervigilance is required to avoid death by chemical asphyxiation, viral syndrome, antimicrobial-resistant fungus. Starvation or thirst. Cancer, cancer of all kinds. The sugar. Vehicle wrecks. One could run out of gas close to nightfall out in the bald hills and end up dead of exposure. Somehow public spaces remain, sad shabby town squares and schoolhouses where you can still get shot up if you're unlucky. And outside settlements lurk the wolves. Hunters. Punji pits. Ambush and abduction. End up flayed in some redneck oubliette. Demons feeding you pieces of yourself. Alive only in the barest technical sense, held captive by some dead-eyed Seth or Kevin who picked up tips for tracking and trapping animals from survivalist YouTube channels, who learned from their pappy how to dress a deer, maybe traded heinous pictures and videos on Tor networks. Elaborate torments resorted to out of boredom and blank despair. A hillbilly twist on scaphism using expired liter bottles of pop instead of honey and milk. Depravity. True psycho shit. It's become abundantly clear that computer games prevented more atrocities than they inspired. This is the same familiar nightmare, amplified. But the butterflies, yes. The Monarchs. The 12,000 eyes each of them possesses, so complex and finely made, are now clouded by cataracts of benzene. The magnetic compasses inside them spin hopelessly. Weighed down with heavy metals. No updrafts carry them. Stillness reigns as the whole region is gripped by wind drought. Finally having reached some tragic and unanimous accord, they give up and spiral down lifeless through the colorless afternoon like seed pods from a great calamitous tree. Their delicate bodies bedeck the rooftops of the boarded-up houses which stand sentinel on Black Diamond Highway. Having moments ago passed from this vanquished planet into legend, they are shedding already the many hundred million microscopic scales—real-life pixie dust—which had given them their flaming coloration. Ornatly patterned wings—black veins framing a fading but still-blazing orange—twitch in death throes. To the little lamb, they resemble the windows of miniature churches burning. Conflagrations raging behind leaded glass panes. The lamb has seen enough. She lingers on the ridge for a moment longer before turning the ignition key and kicking down with all the force her 88 pounds affords her. The engine roars to life and little sister blasts off down the sandy path with reckless and understandable abandon, kicking up huge clouds of dust which hang in the air long after she has disappeared into the ashen valley. This is happening in 2039.

But for now, it's now. A stubbornly persistent illusion, as the man said. It's 2023 and I'm nearly 17, living with Mama Mare and Grammy Lillian in a dead coal camp we're all still bothering to call Venus. Built by robber barons long ago in a soft hollow south of Miracle Mountain, it's a falling-down company

town scribbled out by rotting trolley tracks and collapsed trestle bridges. It's late spring and redbud petals carpet all the garbage in the streets with their sweetness, accumulating in pink drifts against the fences and the ruined buildings. The portal of Vivian No.10 gapes like a lobotomy patient. The mine knows a very old hymn which he sings from time to time when the wind lends him breath.

I'm locked up in my lonely room with two windows— as is each of us. Blonde god rays glitch and glimmer as they filter through the mutant beech tree. The leaves cast transparent shadows which flutter and pixelate on the ceiling. The last shafts of dusty sun gild six hundred silver push pins stuck in my posters and polaroids. I've got a gravity bong set up permanently next to my bed, which I fashioned from a spackle bucket and a plastic Arizona sweet tea jug. I had a dab rig at one point, but it's hard to come by wax or concentrate way out here in bumfuck, and anyway I don't need much help with astral projection.

Some of my better oil canvases are hanging on the walls. Elsewhens and memories sent by Our Friends, and some abstracts based on record covers I love: *The Glow Pt. 2*. *Rid of Me*. *Pink Moon*. A mortifying portrait of Kaki King. You could say I had a phase. When my 5th grade teacher Ms. Gleason *gone so young her eyes smile for a lonely child* taught us to collage, she brought in stacks of old magazines— *National Geographic*, *Vanity Fair*, what-have-you. And an issue of *Acoustic Guitar* (the 2004 Holiday Shopping Guide) made its way into my pile. Kaki was smoldering there on the cover, not much older than I am now. It was the first time it occurred to me that I was probably queer.

I'm working out a lurching, deconstructed version of "The Yellow Princess", struggling valiantly with the crazy high action on daddy's disfigured Guild 12-string. It was left under a bed when he 'gone west'. Oxy OD. New Year's Eve 2010. Mare had flushed his stash several weeks earlier. It came to blows and she managed to land a critical elbow, dragging him unconscious and bloodied to their bedroom and chaining him to the radiator. She stood watch as he wept and trembled and sweated it out. He was clean for a hot second. But nothing in this world can match the terrible momentum of an addict who has decided to hit up their dealer. *Que Sera, Sera*. Reality shifts and rearranges itself to compensate for any attempted intervention. Our family—me, Mare, Grandpa Aaron, his mama, and her mama, and on and on—we're watchers on this promontory *the origins of the name anganguero are disputed a common translation is a very high place others maintain that inside the forest would be more accurate or entrance to the cave* Folks below make their way on a valley road, casting shadows that fan out before and behind them, the many frozen frames of the most mundane movies you ever saw. We are sometimes obliged to call out in warning, though we know our voices will be drowned out by the howling wind. By the fluttering of a billion wings.

I have a few memories of dad cooking, singing, baby-talking. Once he held me on his lap as we rode through the empty streets of Venus on an ATV.

I've been told I found him cold on the couch. This I do not remember.

~~When I grew up and fell in love
I asked my sweetheart what lies ahead?
Will we have rainbows day after day?
Here's what my sweetheart said~~

I practice with my father's guitar like a prizefighter trains with weighted gloves. Later I'll plug in Syd's Mustang and allow myself to feel powerful. I have the dead frets of Dad's Guild mapped to muscle memory. I know all the spots where you can't bend strings, else they buzz and choke out. The mahogany and the rosewood and ebony shrink and twist in the wintertime like people do. The sitka top bellies at the bridge when it's humid. Certain shapes higher up on the neck rattle metallic, pretty and sad, so goddamn

sad and beautiful and o'er hollow hills the mists do roll in we live in the shadow of miracle mountain in a crooked house built by crooked men

Mare and I live with the house. We live in and with the house that Grandma Lillian is. Staircases loop back on themselves, cold graceful infinity. Rooms switch places and rotate, or else disappear for weeks or years. I'd very much like to practice "Avril 14th" on that decrepit tack piano but I lost track of it. Everything is spinning, spinning, spinning while I sleep. I hear footsteps in lightless rooms above me. Our lives are the psychedelic soap operas of higher beings.

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Some days I wake up not in my own bedroom, on top of the covers in a familiar guest room. The smell of old linens and stale tobacco smoke. Faded floral prints of variegated hues for the bedspread and upholstery. That 70s style wood paneling adorned only with a single strange painting of flowers in a vase. A different perennial every time. The suitcase under the bed is always red though *there is a hollow ring 14 million miles wide girding a collapsed star as the insane hairless ape dams mighty rivers*

TRAGEDY STRIKES AT GARY-AREA GENDER REVEAL PARTY AS WIDELY BELOVED P.E. TEACHER SUFFERS PULMONARY EMBOLISM

I'm probably getting expelled from Mount View for telling Mr. Weaver his *where and when*. He turned purple but he wasn't scared. Must have come off like a put-on despite my best efforts to sell it, I mean some real thundering John the Baptist whites-of-the-eyes-type shit. I overheard him say something exceptionally vile about Ms. Adkins to his neo-völkisch pal Blevins. So I made a scene in the cafeteria giving him his date and time, like *i am the pine trees breathing and slow growing hugging the holler where your cow eyed daughter kaleigh lives with her closeted homo husband and all those potato faced children and you will crumple on the soft sod of the back yard in front of god and everybody yes it is the jamboree for your new potato grandbaby and with a forkful of pink cake halfway between your fat face and a dixie plate a massive DVT shakes loose in your left calf and torpedoes your heart yeah you will lie there while the lights flicker and fade and the sun shrinks and turns black like a lime rotting on the countertop you'll be so full of wonder at the beauty of small things the greenhead flies on a nearby pile of dog shit marvelous just marvelous now your field of vision is tunneling amazing so fine are their emerald tinted eyes and wings banded red and violet like oil slicks yes oh yes and all this while your family and friends stand slack jawed gaping wasting critical minutes and when all is said and done you'll spend your*

*last pathetic days paralyzed and blind in a medical recliner with shit in your pants roaring without language mashing a buzzer for your gorgeous gay hospice nurse Justin repent your heart is withered already it pumps ashes from the wasteland you'll leave to your grandchildren hell is the truth seen too late you nazi fuck and as you can imagine he didn't much care much for that. Then I said some stuff everybody already knows about how his wife blacks out in roadhouses and low places and bangs Barbarians. Well that did the trick. He actually grabbed me by the wrist hard enough to leave a mark and dragged me down to the front office, pausing in the long dark of the empty hallway to slam me with great force against a locker. Got all the way up in my face. Walmart Drakkar Noir, dark blue orbit and gut rot vodka. Starts poking my chest with that fat finger and hissed *you listen the fuck to me you keep that yap shut you little hill trash dyke cunt fuckin freak everybody knows you and your whole goddamn family nuttier 'n squirrel shit including that dead junkie daddy so you better just watch your fuckin self you understand me you fuckin hear you and that cue bald stump jumpin lush bitch of a mother because i know every fuckin goddamn motherfuckin cop in the county and if you aint careful i swear to god me and my son in laws gonna come to the holler n pay you-all a visit some night and then youll be fuckin sorry i promise you**

In an elsewhen, Grammy Lil is gathering flowers for tea, and those lovely magenta jellies she makes with pectin and lemon juice and shit tons of sugar. Spread it on Texas toast with gobs of butter. Lillian, mother of my mother. You are a woman when you are not a pack of black dogs or a whirling curtain of dogwood blossoms.

Up on Black Diamond Highway things are lively: Wendy's, Dollar General, Vape Kulture. Many houses stand abandoned, covered in colorful graffiti. Anything you see tagged SKANKSY is mine. Though I do prefer to paint in the shade of the mine's manways and drift mouths. I do mostly hieroglyphs in a made-up language. I have mastered the Cool S. I consider my grand masterpiece to be the anthropomorphized erection wearing a swastika shaft band (would that be a belt? A sash?) and blowing a gym whistle, which I did on the concession stand at the Mount View High football complex. Sometimes I start out trying to capture the essence of Our Friends, but they resist depiction in such a primitive medium *they bloom superluminal from THE RIGHT THERE they have seven shadows and singing rings they project future memories from deep hibernation as they await heat death but there is fear in this transmission they tell me something immense is out in the dark gorging itself on starfire and spreading spreading RA 14h 50m 0s | Dec +46° 0' 0"* So how the fuck do you paint that in a cave? I dry swallow three Klonopin and light one of the Camel Crushes I found in the back of the kitchen drawer. Must be pretty fuckin old, I know they've been discontinued for a couple years at least. I crunch the menthol bead in the filter and *tap tap tap*: Top of my head, inside my eyebrow, then my orbital, my lips, my chin, the hollow below my collarbone and my underarm till the pills hit and eventually the bastards go backwards and leave me alone again in my little room with two windows.

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tomorrow, i've been in this room forever and again today when I was once in some sunday blustery and bright the kind that dries kids' tears and spittle before anything gets too far out of hand yes i'll be this delicious michelin baby in a red safeway buggy with buttery leggings dangling helplessly the automagic doors shriek open and the intoxicating rush of violet dusk cold woodsmoke dances with the queer sweet scents of the quarter ball machines baby P34RL fussing over glittery plastic trash and super bouncy balls and candy that gives you blood cancers

My ex Sydney lived up past the post office, in a big pale yellow shitbox with her brother Tommy and some other degenerates whose minds were fried by meth and SS lightning. She left town when the place burned, and I have not forgiven her. No text, no call. Fuckhead Tom left his basement lab unattended to get a dutch at the Exxon. Honestly, the place looks nicer with the clapboard blackened around the front

windows like eyeshadow. I ride past when I feel like feeling sad. I miss jamming with Syd. She left her Mustang here, though. Mine now, bitch. Syd's future was always inscrutable, like my own.

In my head the light often bends to 2012-ish. Things felt better before Our Friends began this slow unfolding from The Right There. Sometimes I just go back and live in it *mama mare drives right-handed hanging cigs out the window of the rusted duster there's a hundred stubbed-out usa golds in the cupholders her blue smoke jukes in the crossbreeze the smell of thunderheads drifts in through the a/c vents we hydroplane home on i-79 winding past hollers zombified by oxycodone and prescription speed i'm still safe in the lie our gift has not yet been presented to me this me the me I am telling grace still cascades backward through the aperture of the present moment out of eternity and into a not-yet-fallen world*

Guitars are living things—rather, they can be, once they're sufficiently soaked in oil and sweat and spit and coated in dead skin cells. I remember reading something about how they have to be played and touched and taught how to be something that isn't furniture. Houses become homes once they're saturated. According to its faded label, Dad's Guild was born in a factory in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1970, three years after Mare. The soundhole smells like attics. In an elsewhen, everybody is watching on live TV as boys get fed to the jungle's deep green thresher. Cue "Gimme Shelter, "All Along the Watchtower", etc. Some come home with no souls, or maimed like Mare's friend Albie, who rides in dark boxcars back and forth across America, searching and searching *they cross oceans bearing in them the black echo their light left in the tunnels*

Mare never makes any effort to speak to me like a child. It's 2013. I am seven years old. She's positively blitzed (this is how she cancels Our Friends' transmissions), telling how the 'avaricious sons of bitches' U.S. Coal and Coke Co. built many camps like Venus quick and dirty with creosote-coated beams and railroad ties. Their greed led to many catastrophes. In 1967 No.10 Vivian *swallowed grandpa aaron's pick sings lost in the rhythm of the relay he dreams of disasters bearing down on each of us thorazine corn whiskey cathedral ships great arks of suffering spanish galleons making landfall in the americas lillians husband is out of his fuckin tree vivian no 10 may well belch out his bleached skeleton now he's whistling and singing and swinging his lunch pail disappearing into the black of the manway and then then then then thehen thenthenennenenethere's no justice in this life honey only equal retribution* Grammy Lillian fabricated doll babies of the robber barons and their kin, crafting each of them with care from corn cobs and moss and cloth and clay. She strung them up in her dark apartments *her foundation is rail ties coated in poison she is held together with climbing vines and hydrangeas which are she is human and she is haunted objects cryptids floating in an ancient garden tall and thin and terrifying*

I think the secret is something we forget when we're born. But it comes back in flashes and fits, and we're always trying to tell each other and failing spectacularly at it. It'll never be possible unless we invent novel tenses and directions that expand or fall forever through themselves. An isometric perspective for spacetime. We manage to agree on certain aspects of a sprawling shared hallucination. Dreaming together what might be there, outside a room with two windows, forever.

Something I've been circling. I'm not elsewhen to tell it. I'll read from a screen. Powerbook with a melted battery. Edited for clarity:

Some years back, as a present for my 11th, Mare got it in her head we should fix daddy's Guild. She came across a music shop called *Rhett's Frets* in the yellow pages (Mare doesn't 'do computers'). My birthday fell on a school day but it didn't matter because a) my mother viewed schools as prisons for children and let me cut whenever the fuck I felt like it, and b) even back in That Then I

was already getting in trouble and had been suspended over some nonsense or other.

So Mare steadied herself with a nip, made me a quick breakfast and off we went. Winding our way up the desolate stretch of Route 7 north of Welch, a thick yellow haze descended on the late morning. We worried about wildfires and scanned the radio for information, but there were only praise stations that faded in and wavered for a few seconds before disintegrating into static.

The trip couldn't have taken much more than an hour, but it felt a lot longer. At exactly 11:11 AM we pulled into a big dingy strip mall called *Ricky's Plaza II*. I remember that detail because that's the time on my birth certificate. Mare gave my hand a squeeze and stroked my cheek. *Happy birthday, Precious Pearl*. For all her faults, I've never once wondered if my mother loves me.

We were the only car parked in the colossal empty lot. All along the tan facade, we could still faintly make out names of failed businesses whose red-letter signage had been removed to make way for future occupants. *Vinyl Destination*. *Jimmy Lee's Little Italy*. *A-Z Video*. We walked the length of the whole place, scanning the scores of darkened storefronts. The literal specters of people's dead dreams hanging just above us. The air felt heavy.

Ricky's seemed to be laid out in a big "L" shape at first, but as we walked the length of it we noticed the place had a smooth, almost parabolic curve to it. Everything was still and silent. No cars passed in either direction on Route 7. We were about to turn around and head home when I spotted the neon "OPEN" sign.

A distant chime sounded as we entered. The interior was shabby and ill-lit. Dry exoskeletons of flies littered the inside of the fluorescent light filters. The walls were all pegboard, but no shelves had been installed. There were a few racks with instructional guitar DVDs and VHS that looked bootlegged or homemade. The teachers pictured on the hand-laminated covers were pockmarked nightmare men with shining eyes. Diddlers with elaborate comb overs. There was a small selection of guitar tablature books—*Appetite for Destruction*. *40 Oz. To Freedom*. *Human Clay*.

There wasn't much in the way of instruments, cabling, or accessories, just some Ibanez effects pedals that looked as if they'd been fished out of a flooded basement. There were some scattered tins of Devil Dog brand nylon picks, and a single sequined strap that read "Stevie Sweeps". It all seemed hastily arranged. It's hard to describe, but it's like the store and everything in it had been procedurally generated by some malign intelligence with little familiarity or interest in retail.

A bizarre muzak version of my father's favorite Townes Van Zandt song—"Waiting 'Round to Die"—drifted out of a paint-spattered Panasonic boombox balanced precariously on a tall stool. I had the powerful urge to turn and leave many times, but the electrical impulses died in my spine before they reached my feet. The soiled gray carpet became a conveyor belt. I stood there drifting past a series of blurred watercolors depicting smeared silhouettes of

19th-century ladies and gentlemen. They strolled down ashen avenues in surreal cityscapes. They looked to me like the work of a disturbed, moderately gifted preteen. A wolf knows a wolf and a thief knows a thief, I guess.

As I got closer to the back, it really started to dawn on me that we had made a grave mistake coming here, and we were now in serious trouble.

Then we saw him: mass of humanity, glistening and pink, hunched over an immense workbench. A true giant, testing the strength of a tiny roly chair. We could see he was in the process of soldering something in the exposed guts of a Fender Blues Jr. The smoke curled and climbed in the unventilated workspace, drawing my eye up to a poster of Nancy Wilson from Heart. She was wearing a low-cut red dress and playing a cherry red Strat to match— a fucking cop guitar if there ever was one, but my god. 'Rhett' broke the spell Nancy cast when he wheeled around to face us. He was slick bald with thick black arm hair and bugged-out yellow eyes. He wore a too-big crucifix on a chunky wood bead necklace. Christ's agony was shockingly rendered in minute detail by a master's hand. Behind him were all kinds of meters and measurement devices with needles and blinking indicators. A white sine wave pulsed gently on the screen of a very old oscilloscope. To me it looked like the cockpit of a crashed spacecraft.

'Rhett' offered no pleasantries to his stunned customers. He simply removed the 12-string from its case and began inspecting it. It was an F-512, a jumbo body. At that age I could barely hold it in my lap, but in Rhett's hands it looked like the daintiest mandolin. Once finished, he gave his professional recommendation in an asthmatic singsong that clashed with his vast physicality. He said the neck would have to be reset with a shim. Furthermore, the crack in the body needed to be braced, and naturally a full re-fret and setup would also be necessary.

He quoted an outrageous sum. Or perhaps it was reasonable, only not for us. When he sensed my mother's hesitance, Rhett leaned over us, bloviating with unmasked condescension on the importance of humidification. He chided us *lil ladies* for our neglect of a fine vintage instrument. The wheeze on all his vowel sounds seemed to split his voice into repulsive 3-part harmony.

Mare stood there trying to imagine scenarios where we could spare that kind of money. The giant rapped impatiently on an empty display case with tufted knuckles. Rivulets of sweat dripped from the tip of his nose and pooled on the glass. I began to notice a powerful odor—overripe fruit, menthol cigarettes, and something else strange and metallic, like an exotic alloy.

After a long while, Mare said we regretfully had to decline this expensive restoration. It was then that 'Rhett's' previous demeanor—merely one of an arrogant man bowed beneath the heavy burden of great competence and expertise—shifted. He demanded a substantial 'bench fee,' amounting to half the total cost of the repair. His voice had modulated down at least a full octave. The

meters and LEDs behind him started to blink rapidly and the oscilloscope glowed intensely, registering impossible waveforms. The buzzing of the fluorescent track lights swelled, an approaching swarm.

By then I was in full-on panic mode, but I also knew I wasn't alone in this. I glanced over at Mare. She was blank, her jaw set. Throughout this tense exchange, my mother had been maneuvering her own body almost imperceptibly between me and this thing, which I had by then recognized for what it was: A demon. *Erlkönig*. During the final excruciating silence, she slowly nudged me back toward the door with her forearm. The standoff ended when we made a break for the exit.

This time the door chime was mind-shattering. We had spent maybe half an hour in the shop, but when we emerged an impossible midnight had supplanted the blank afternoon. A terrible red moon was bearing down on us, blasting itself apart on the glittering asphalt into countless little reflections of itself, which ran away in every direction like spiderlings from a mother's husk. Mare grabbed me up along with the guitar and booked it to the car through the empty parking lot. After briefly fumbling with the keys (like in the movies), she mashed it out of there. Got up to 80 in a 35. The clock on the dash read 12:11 AM. For the first time in my short life (and sadly, not the last), I felt the stinging violation of missing hours. I wept hysterically as Mare sped south like a maniac, frantically checking the rearview to see if we were being pursued, taking the wrong exits, making abrupt turns on purpose. We went around in circles like this for hours before finally heading home.

My mother was shaken for weeks after. She blamed herself for suppressing the gift, *our gift*, with drink. Said she might have seen it coming if she wasn't so weak and pathetic. She stopped cold-turkey but eventually the DTs and waking dreams broke her and she backslid.

Shortly after I met Syd, we got too stoned and I told her what had happened in that warp north of Welch. She got very worked up and insisted we go back there 'to fuck with the guy.' Borrow her brother's pistol. She clearly didn't get it. Though there was no fuckin chance whatsoever I was setting foot in that shop ever again, I went because I was already in love and wanted to seem fearless. We drove for hours up and down Route 7 but couldn't find Ricky's Plaza II. In the spot where I remembered it being, there was only a scorched acre of bare trees that quivered in the heat and flickered like a fast-forward VHS of itself. At least once a month, 'Rhett' appears in my dreams. I wake up soaked and screaming.

*wainscot guest room daisies in a vase a suitcase i will walk up to the highway mama when you hitched to
nyc you were younger than me just thirteen already your hair had gone gray danny discovered your
crumpled body in front of that big bus station those skulls surrounding you would have done unspeakable
things but instead a purgatorial miracle you fell into family acceptance truest love oh danny scotty martin
bobby charlie salvatore sam david klaus jeffrey arthur peter yes only peter so handsome only peter lived
he is rich built heaven in connecticut he owes you a debt he sends you letters darling bootsie bring*

precious pearl she will love it here there are horses morning coffee on the deck golden mist in dewkissed meadows wildflowers sunsets but no we choose this snowy television oceans of bourbon outrunning nightmares oh to belong to find belonging thats what i want but how could i leave you here in hell in this house in lillian in venus in fuckin west virginia still i cannot help it I hate you bitterly I am so jealous those dirty dawns you spent surrounded by friends and protectors danceteria pyramid club limelight paradise garage cut some fucker if you have to honey it's him or you help the boys through hangovers and breakups heavy breathing hangups sense the tidal wave approaching then youre dressing lesions making eggs and tea feeding ice chips dripping cool water from a washcloth fevers raging reagan is satan ice baths helped them to the toilet clean their shit wipe their asses hold them as they puke and weep run your pretty fingers over strings of swollen lymph nodes they are artists painters novelists choreographers poets stop directors dancers stop it stop it now designers drag queens beautiful so beautiful all of them never think never think stop thinking what could have been they were bartenders and waiters at nightfalls charlie got you the barista gig and paul vario would come in with his bodyguards for espresso he tipped a hundred dollars and he'd say 'i want it so hot when i drink it i curse your mother's name' yes the months keep passing new catastrophes you are scooping untold bumps of coke from recessed filters of parliaments filthy vanities blood red subway tiles yes cigarettes a million cigarettes and quaaludes and heroin how many gallons of bourbon anything everything really so if we are to be radios then tune us between stations if you can stay wasted our friends never bloom they never show you the future you cannot fuckin change if you stay toasted they cannot show you the erlking living in a raised ranch on lyndale avenue dig up his basement you will find the missing and he fixes guitars he hid in the hold of a wooden ship he waited in the nightmares of the calvinists his time come at last he spreads stripmall fingers and squeezes well mama you say there are split points and junctions and think we missed a big one eleven years back 12142012 twenty murdered children and six teachers too and we laid down and took it we still take it consenting to rapacious geriatric sociopaths on aricept keep the plates spinning spinning smile more you should smile more you got a pretty mouth pretty lips limitless growth complexity too much all too much cannot be sustained cameras everywhere food web decimated loss of biodiversity everything i keep dreaming of the lamb flying on her dirtbike through the hollows sandy and shaded all around are the ghosts of former water we left our children this empty country gray wastes places which no longer warrant names we leave behind the depravities of contemporary history for new ones some basement chambers with drains in the floor plush dungeons never to be discovered and we will disappear from this earth along with everything else qué será será this is not a place of honor but really how many serial killers could still be active in north america in west virginia in maryland in new jersey how many how many how

Sometimes they bloom like ink angels, and instead of these visions and insinuations of everything I would like to have died never knowing, it'll just be a little night music. Bangers actually, composed in some dazzling lab to nuke my specific pleasure centers. Something that gets this lil hill sister's webbed toes tapping. An 8-bit symphony blooming from one mangled vocal sample. A stillborn androgynous pop star is pitch-shifted and ripped apart while big buzzing synth pads are punctured by thrift store Silvertones wailing through blown practice amps. Fake flutes float over a roomy drum kit which is perpetually falling apart and reassembling itself. There's a coda with trap hi-hats and a rap verse for good measure. Sophisticated and weightless, it drips sweet syrup and cum. Tepid and empty. Diet Dr. Pepper Cherry. I must admit the shit rips.

~~When I was just a little girl
I asked my mother, what will I be
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?
Here's what she said to me~~

Made some doll babies.
Popsicle stick skeletons and river clay and pond scum and midribs of maple leaves.

Richard, Jonathan, Mortimer, Kathe, David, Beverly and Theresa.
The seven sacks of shit Sacklers and their kin past present and future.
Hexed them fucks backwards and forwards and sideways through time.

Their wives and husbands exes and personal assistants
and mistresses and toadies and sycophants
All of them who fetched and ran errands
picked up the Starbucks and drycleaning
All the agents and the lapdogs and lobbyists
and the fucking congressmen and presidents who let it happen
cousins second cousins too and unwanted interlopers
and goldiggers and the stockbrokers and all their children
yes the babies yes even the little ones
their souls will be shredded to confetti forever
and especially the Purdue Pharma reps fuckin devils
and the crooked goddamn pain clinic doctors
and the pushers the Dylans and Robs in the beat to shit Nissans
and the distributors with pistols and the lawyers and *their* lawyers
and the fucking shareholders all the shareholders all of them who stood to gain something
who got rich who profit still from our misery

I will hex everyone who is complicit everyone connected even tangentially to this blank anguish
all the people and animals and objects all tied to each other by invisible filaments
*to all of us witches yes i will shred them all and paste them together again with amber sap and shred them
again forever they will be the conscious ticker tape at our interminable victory day parade our righteous
vengeance shall unmake the cosmos my density bends the old light behind me the supermassive black
holes feasting at the center of every galaxy begin to vomit up swallowed eternities the prismatic scales of
my raiments spread our friends' multiplicitous sorrowful reflections into a quintillion iridescent and
pitiless elsewhens insect men your treachery is unprecedented and these coerced repentances meaningless
ringed priestess
grand thaumaturge of excruciations
look now into secret eyes and tremble*

for i am your basilisk

We are moving now as one over the snow capped peaks of the Transvolcanic Belt. My ten million siblings and I. We are legion, seeking winter haven. Without thought, without language. Since glaciers retreated we do this. In the valley, a town is growing. The ape is carting his precious metals from the mountains.

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oS0 - - - - - ORo
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