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Escapism // PASSING // Motion Sickness

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Escapism

Ten, maybe eleven, pigeons sit inside a crater in the Arizona flatland. Their wings gently stretch the empty pocket walls, splitting seeds, the hock-jointed boys club. A rabbit passes by and they screech before realizing it's just a man singing a song about one.

An orange ranch home south of the cavity claims to be an Andy Warhol museum. The television loops a videotape of people trying on wigs. A greasy tarantula holds my hand like a child and asks for a drink of water.

The shrine underneath the sink holds a candle inside a bucket. Hot lightning hits the roof and it all goes dark. Her rumble waves the room like a wild white flag. The owner wasn't home. I slept in his bed.

With no warning, the tenth pigeon explodes into a pile of feathers and twigs. The remaining nine or ten pigeons take turns gnawing at his bones. The savory beak. He is little more than a withered European mouth in the dirt. How does that protest music go again?

The dusty Southwest rips through my window like a suicidal blue jay. My plucky hands tremble, oily with bile. The window slams dark in shame. I stretch myself flat against the spoiled carpet. It'll be days before anyone notices.

PASSING

From up your gullet crawls puberty's
late bloom. A goose eats the letters in
your name like jelly beans. He hides inside
a pulped chamber, sleeps in the pits
and fissures. Hissing with all those
ugly teeth. Molars ripen next to
the carrots, julienned.

I sit on the subway neighboring possums.
They read newspapers and drink wet coffee.
One wears a jade necklace and pats his plump
middle. It's embarrassing, really, finding him
wearing all that costume jewelry. Slimy-toed,
greasy-palmed, pale sprout. I carry a dagger in my red
backpack. I do not know the difference between us
at times. A coyote steps onto the train; a bright purple
fear pours across the platform. His abdomen
produces a hand and waves. I swallow it whole
like a real man.

Motion Sickness

We spiral across the turnpike, a blur of hands and gasoline. I can't hold onto the steering wheel, onto all of these abstract ideas so early in this poem. Mother Mary taps my shoulder and asks if I would consider using the word "motor oil" instead. We're throwing up and it's like

we're kids again. Our roadmap folds into a fan and shoots into the puckered eye of a toll booth worker. He squawks, collapsing like a Great Stork. At home, his kids flop around in the mud. Birds in oil. They garble like salmon-hungry hounds. A falling such and such. Mother Mary asks if I got lazy here. Even if

I could talk about myself without using my name—Instead: You take off your shirt and say something mean. Farmed flesh. Rivers of legs. It's so hard to look at you when you are so hungry. A jewel falls into my mouth. I taste nothing. You hold me in your mouth. You say I taste nothing.

Between bodies there are pages of poems dedicated to my queer shame. In a perfect world, you take the wheel. In a perfect world, I don't flinch when we hit water.