

12-1-2020

## A Ripening // March 2018 // The Fairway Market Hostage Crisis

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### Recommended Citation

Eyer, Kayla (2020) "A Ripening // March 2018 // The Fairway Market Hostage Crisis," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 11.

Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol9/iss1/11>

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# A Ripening

It was night, and summer was slow, unrisen: still bloating with heat, still turgid from early June downpours. The insect-loud dark pulsed around us

and the moon swallowed itself over and over again, the world hungry & raw from growth. Everything tightened into the salt-damp shock of a licked

battery, the flesh swaddling our bones heavy with primordial aches as we pressed against each other. In the humid blackness, no one could name us

humans. We could be tawny-gold pumas or the shudder of field mice, hearts fluttering with euphoria in straw burrows, never knowing a world where

things are unnatural and coarse. *We* could be natural, here. Of course. Of course. Silky and sure and thorough, we beckon glistening dawn,

calling out into the morning-soaked sky like song thrushes in the breeze.

# March 2018

I stand in the garden, my hands buried to the soil.  
The earth cracks open around the cradles of my fists, still frozen.  
Last frost deemed the world glacial, inhospitable,  
but the radishes and rampions are indifferent; still demand nurturing  
from me. I uproot my stiff palms to greet you, invite you inside  
for a cup of coffee. Your hair curls, soft against your jaw now—  
an unwelcome reminder that you change and I do not see it.  
Months slip between us these days, fall into the cracks  
where I am a guest in my house.  
The cardboard carton of milk in the kitchen is curdled.  
I try not to think of my mother as she vacantly poured it in her oatmeal earlier,  
just the way she would scrape the mold off loaves  
of homemade bread for my bagged lunches: quiet and clinical  
in the blue-water light of dawn. I pour the sour milk into the sink,  
watch the curds congeal by the drain. A pulpy mess stares back at me,  
spoiled in my absence. I am a poltergeist in my mother's house,  
writhing on my childhood mattress and splattering things in her sink.  
You push yourself off the counter and wrap your arms around me,  
coalescing the frigid clouds of our breath.  
You whisper against the pale skin of my shoulder with each kiss;  
cushion each press of your lips with a lie about the way you miss me.  
I lie back. I feel you wash over me, our bodies the hushing of waves on the shore.  
When it is over, we share a cigarette in the seafoam oasis of my childhood bedroom.  
I pull on my woolen sweater & you lean into the scratch of my warmth for a slow  
moment, then stand up to leave. I stand in the kitchen, my hands submerged in soap  
and water. I pour the remnants of our morning into a basin, set the mugs to dry.  
In frosty quiet, the radishes and rampions wait; entombed in the arctic earth,  
purgatoric through spring.

# The Fairway Market Hostage Crisis

*After Richard Siken's "I Had A Dream About You"*

In swollen-hot air, garbage simmered & crisped / and I stretched my arm under the passenger seat in desperation; / Aeryn told me to *hurry up* but I couldn't find my cigarettes / & I didn't want to leave them, in case there was a holdup & we got stuck / in a hostage situation—it was prophetic foresight, / I informed her: we'd be hiding between those organic on-the-vine / tomatoes & the tiny burlap bags of shallots for hours with nothing to smoke. / *Don't be silly*, she said, so I followed her / into the store's air-conditioned belly, abandoning my half-full / pack of American Spirits to wilt & wither in the fever-stale Subaru; / off to scoop coffee beans from bulk bins & thump honeydew melons. / We were debating citrus (Star Ruby or Oro Blanco) when someone yelled *nobody move!* / and fired three shots, tearing through the artificially chilled air like bitter greens. / Shocked, Aeryn dropped the grapefruits & I leaned over to whisper / *I told you so*, because I had, really, and she whispered back, / indignant, *I hope they shoot you in the leg* & then we dissolved / into soundless hysterics, cowering in the produce section / where we handed our wallets to the balaclavas / & the people inside of them, meaning no grapefruits would be bought; / the whole afternoon wasted. Aeryn and I sat on the vinyl tiles, old sweat / congealing on our bodies as we waited for the red-blue schmeat of police officers / to concede that yes, in fact, there had been a robbery & they were pretty sorry / about that, but there was nothing they could do for us just yet / or probably ever, and we very pointedly did not smoke any cigarettes there, / between the three packs of pomelos and

the four-dollar starfruits, / in that fluorescent labyrinth which had once been  
called our grocery store. / When we left, the roads were / summer golden-  
dark & heavy, the two grapefruits we had smuggled out / plump and ripe in  
the crime-stained early evening. I set them on my lap like twin suns / while  
Aeryn grabbed the cigarettes from the back seat & lit them / in the glossy wet-  
hot silence that stretched between us, and when we got / home, we halved the  
grapefruits and drizzled honey on them, scooping out / each segment with  
Goodwill spoons. The whole day tumbled off us, the / impossible tartness  
bursting on our tongues / like gunpowder exploding into flame.