Kristy Odelius

Strange Trades

Shearsman Books
Exeter
For my parents, with gratitude
CONTENTS

I.

Thoughts of Falling, Pollen, Pare / 13
Forecast / 14
“It’s curtains, ars poetica” / 17
If we’d met in the swamp, it would’ve been different / 19
Three Flights in a Multiplying Sky / 20
Aubade, Big Eyes / 22
Vertigo to Eros / 23
Pantoum / 24
Equivalents / 26
Vi Ses, Water World / 28
Baby, What Kind of Help Do You Really Want? / 30
The Atmosphere Leaks a Troubadour / 32
Reverie, or war / 33
Dress-up / 34
Impostor with Housemaid’s Knee / 35
Interview / 36

II.

Dislocation Lesson III / 39
The Virgins of Chicago (1) / 40
And How / 41
The Virgins of Chicago (2) / 42
Novatrix / 43
Elegy / 44
The Newlyweds Climb A Fence / 45
The Virgins of Chicago (3) / 46
Third Grade / 47
Dislocation Lesson IV / 48
Dislocation Lesson II / 49
The Virgins of Chicago (4) / 50
The Four Horsemen Cave to the Mayor’s Demands / 51
   The Virgins of Chicago (5) / 52
   We Make Strange Trades / 53

III.

Slide / 57
A Breath Catalogue / 59
No Breath Found / 60
Mere / 61
Strategies of Lip, Tactics of Late / 63
My Mister’s Eyes Are Something Like Dim Sum / 68
   Nightsongs / 69
   Raving Stark Mad / 73
   “Magical Thinking” / 74
   Winter / 75
Nascent, sage, gulfs of air / 76
Months From Now in Sweden / 78
    Ekphrastic / 79
    Infestation by Islands / 80
    Cardio/sky / 81
Ineffable Green Thing, Loved by All / 82
Perhaps we ought to feel with more imagination.
—John Ashbery

I have thus endeavored to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations.
—Mary Shelley
THOUGHTS OF FALLING, POLLEN, PARE

When champion-bred leaves lie splayed like minimum wage sin, when sleep, a raincoat czar, spreads its liquid hands thin, I’ll say not on: your life, your daddy's knee, a new knife blade.

Try, swim the brackish margin between holy and hole, the ocean’s backstitched locomotion loosely recites “no, there’s no such night in prosaic blood” nodding its great nose toward the mollusky dance-floor.

When honey leaks from eyes bent to breezes eyes like peach pits fragrant and useless, the czar disappears into the rain’s rumpled plumage my heart’s gong-bruised knees buckling through branches.

It’s bee-spit that blows me I admit and you away.
**FORECAST**

*The wife is in the grip of being.*
Anne Carson

* 

All around me orchestra
was spinning out algebra.

I said *closed*—
but eyelids hum,
recurring there.

A fan unfolding
you, sketching
clean birds
on my gold-brown thighs.

> I alleged,
> *I am my love.*

* 

I alleged pleasure
breakwater,
a violet storm.

Bare knees on a girl’s rum sheets
burned a steel distance in me.
Two-tongue. Sea-eyed.  
Sweet fuck thinking  
my pink dresses  
away to real seas.

I won’t, but bear harder.

* 

Curled in  
a star’s mouth,  
black.

Warm as sick cats,  
and bright.

When I say now  
bite straight down.

* 

Sponge-flowers  
drift in  
lullaby chambers,  

a view of lime seeds.

Cut a window in my palm  
sometimes to feel you.
I heard—a lucky girl.

Wrung like a hand waking to rainwater.

* 

Morning flew down the beach, loose cash, the wing we stash keeps a ruby fog.

Each root lodged in your beautiful used-to—dawn, my green glass, what I can’t do with you.
“IT’S CURTAINS, ARS POETICA”

Is this why I stand at my oeil-de-boeuf, blowing sugar bubbles at that guy in the snazzy black hood?

Nipples and waffles rustle a mean last week, ruffle

the constellations oar-locked along our shower curtain.

A falling, my heart, a crocus stalls at dawn.

Street noise adjusts its head, tumbled among the oak leaves.

At home in the bushes, thimbleberries fill, advance a plump sortie.

O thermostat! Preside like a priest over our mouths, dreaming.

Somewhere, an offhanded window winks from a sea-drowned cabin.
On the dock, faded gray paint suggests “submerged rock.”

Underwater, you there, you hear?
IF WE’D MET IN THE SWAMP, IT WOULD’VE BEEN DIFFERENT

Our black eyes transparent, our home base a high bat’s nest stuffed in the chest of an arthritic cypress named for a one-eyed chief, and several of his descendents. Flowering water is the muck of our breakfasts. We ease ourselves, we slip into a sweet, a mosquito bath drawn from waters we don’t dare drain. Oh man, I don’t like the sound of that thunder. Gator jaws are beautiful, like a gum-tree raft. What is “natural”? What is “good” in a forest, tucked under water? Cypress knees rise up from nowhere, on fire, the light making coals of a root’s reflection.

What is all this nonsense? We have swamps on our conscience, like a lie that returns to the edge of our dreams, laughing much louder than our swimming fists. We are caught in a swamp storm, out on the boardwalk, the sky falls toward us with each cracking branch. The cypresses have lived here so long in this silent buzz, they talk of our dumb luck, they make us feel good, as if we were already the past.