

# THE EQUALIZER

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**WUNDERKAMMER**

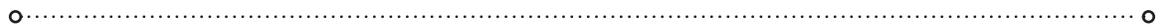
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A Greek crime marrs the pastoral.  
Charts and maps, an atlas of anesthesia-  
Laced nostalgia. A long haired white  
Rabbit, muffled, shot, and stuffed.  
An old yellow chiffon gown, the ribbon  
Hem, ripped and red wine stained.  
Curricula of the mundane.  
Symptoms of trauma, like ghost  
Spots of water on crystal  
That will not be washed off.

**THE DEATH OF THINGAMABOB**



And when the far-flung mascot, Thingamabob, when his heart choked . . . . . his ides . . . .  
! . . . a bloodseam . . . . .! “Am I begone as an omen wormed . . . . . on the snap of my lone  
Apron? . . . . . who mistakes treading for grace (?)” . . . . . Tempest, with no trinkets or poems,  
aches astray.



**SMALL THINGS**

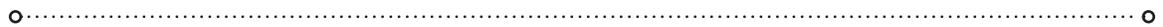
There are bars on the matted carpet that slide back and forth when the door opens  
There are scraps of lettuce on the flat tile which rises up as it expands in the vision  
There are bits of dust on the formica table which are only visible in the golden glow that comes  
when people come and go  
There are shadows on everything cast by the atoms that reflect the glow  
This table is moving but just a little  
Tiny movements like peristalsis or blood flowing that are so always they don't exist  
There is space in this chair but it holds up a thing which also has space  
At the very edges, where the spaces open up, the chair and the thing mix and the line is an  
illusion because the mix is so small and so always  
The feeling of contraction is full  
But many all at once become noticeable and make movements big as a centimeter  
They leave dots  
That aren't everywhere  
The absence of dots in certain spaces is what makes sense  
To eyes which are moving but so fast that it's hardly worth noticing  
So it isn't  
But sometimes is  
There is a mirror letting you see something you weren't supposed to  
Or putting a thing in a different place  
Like above the bridge of the nose  
This is where things usually show up, above the bridge of the nose  
Above the bridge of the nose is a space where things go to be set aside  
Because they are not the most pressing matter at eye  
Every now and again something slips through and leaks out a corner that leads to the space  
above the bridge of the nose

**THE DEATH OF BEAU**



With the beauscrew ignored, Beau misnamed bareness flawed with a (?) catchall manwhine.  
“You withstood distance, you cannot withstand bareness.”

. . . Mildly humored and . . . a cackle . . . Without Beau (i.e. Name) . . . Harpy (hawk of  
invention), wife of Fishyman, will peck his lines in this crawlspace of blamelessness.



## A BIOGRAPHIC

---

She was born of the infant's caul.

She was born with a fancy lack.

Born like a rose, she was an heirloom of herself.

Born to be an antique on a tschotchke shelf.

Born the very day that the black hole went its blackest.

Born of sackcloth and multiple assets.

She was born into the forlorn arms of kindred.

Who loved her out of hatred.

Who hated her from love.

Though neither she was ever quite sure *of*.

But born she was, undoubtedly.

With a gal-about-the-goddam-town credulity.

Birthed by thirds, she split into halvesies.

Bred to wear bindings and falsies.

She was told to solve riddles.

Taught to lace a dirndl.

She laughed in danger's faces,

Played with matches and semantics.

She catechumened crucial fictions.

Scratched the bigger itch, and then (and then!) some.

She became *of a certain age*.

She kept pet ravens in a cage

She slaked her tongue of every thirst.

Then took a turn for the worse.

For soonest ripe is always soonest rotten.

This, she had forgotten.

---

**THE DEATH OF MISCREANT**

○.....○

..... Pined and chorted .....  
..... elbowed, ..... his askance. .... etched with razored seams, ..... his wafting  
toxins.

○.....○

**THE PANGOLIN, WITH GUN**

Another armed animal—in league  
with bola-toting night monkeys, kris-carrying earth pigs,  
and Arctic-sky-eyed huskies, fierce with  
hakupiks! This world is rent before it's sold to us, and Cain, with his  
diagonal-cutting pliers, his sledgehammer,  
his willingness to speak untruth to power—  
Cain, that rhetorical-questioner, was not a special case.  
Mark these thoughts. Then meet me tonight  
at the cliff-tower;  
or at Miss Moore's, under the trapeze;  
or someplace else similarly safe.

**THE AGE OF PETS**

---

waste of human fate  
we still get to choose  
                    and wonder  
    what does it mean  
    to be meant to be

straight to the head  
    like a blow that  
    baffles, it doesn't hurt

unnamed companion  
beside me in the bed,  
                    still sleeping—

missing-school  
suckle berry  
                    fed off  
one for taming  
the did not love  
that did not show.

**IF AND VERY**

Ocean green and sky white.

Those starlings get as flurried as we do (?).

The “jump from” as little effort as the “slipping off.”

In sleep, the peeled back as much progress as *tipped*, *forged* or *bent*.

Not now, but when and later, if and very, she said

(inadvertently swerving for a moment from the day’s topic).

Shorelong voices: *if-we-had-not-been*, *if-we-had-not-been* . . .

covering a small bit of the pulsing, hemispheric skull of world . . .

cross-boning and plate-breaking, forcibly making the voice of god

an audible chiaroscuro against cloud-walls, or?

Weed-rock and the crumbling cliffs.

Bent spine, or pine,

umbrella sky.

< < ∞ > >

**NARRENSCHIFF**

Kingdom of never-  
ending medicine,

this warped breathing  
machine, this dream

ship, opium  
junk, lazy, and dripping

with diamonds, murmurs,  
and spit.

A wonder room, a slumber  
room of girls, grown

and long since given up.  
Shell-shocked,

rummaging the waste  
bin of memory.

Truncated cerebral, glassing  
the wind of the mind in.

A broken universe,  
wrecked motherboard.

Jellyfish, cluster of dead  
wire, white

noise transmitting  
nothing, just a hum.

Locked inside the miracle  
of a holy locus.

## THE PACKAGE

---

First, there was the cardboard box that was wrapped in clear tape. I got a knife. Then there was a box wrapped in sticky paper. Then another layer of sticky paper. Then another layer. Then there was a layer of clear tape. Then, another box. When I opened this box, there was a jar wrapped in sticky paper and more clear tape. There were a bunch of layers of each. It was hard work. I was starting to sweat. When I finally got to the jar, the lid was glued shut. It took me a while to dislodge it. The Jar was filled with glue, but deep in the center of the glue was a small package wrapped in clear tape. Below those layers of clear tape, was a sort of tiny tarp that seemed plastered to a layer of tape beneath it. I unpeeled the tape and the tarp. I cut through the layer beneath that. There was a box rife with screws. It was very screwy. I undid the screws I could undo and got a small hacksaw for some of the others. I was laughing a little to myself by now. Also, I was frustrated. I had broken one of my fingernails. Beneath the screwy box was a ball of tape wrapped with sticky paper and a hard shell like thing coated with a bony chocolate. It was late by now. I chiseled the shell and fought my way through the tape and sticky paper. It was a loosening situation. There was much pulling and slackening. Through it all, not a single phone call. And that's what I think about now. Not a single fucking phone call.

## WE WERE BIRTHED ON THE STAGE AND SLID DOWN ITS AWNING

The tissue that slips round the bouncy ball born,  
 you were unrecognizable, alembic me. I was  
 deflated having been around.

Such circumstances made the dust precipitate;  
 a whip-lash, cedar bend.

Split, then fits there were  
 of falling. Have you bathed in cedar?  
 In a spring artificial? In a small stand  
 of cedar?

Have you rubbed knuckles  
 with the depths  
 lined with white wrists of stone—marble,  
 quartz, limestone—smoothed  
 to a scar?

The cedar roots dye the liquid a soft,  
 a chokecherry red, on a windowsill soft, red undershirt  
 soft, an underthought. Have you used such a line,  
 breathed through a surface, to impress another,  
 to instantiate tether? I want—  
 in silence—to rip off your underthoughts.  
 To remove the knots with my pure troubled teeth.

Once, with the last of it torn, unresolved, I spun fast  
 for tangle, to gather and mangle the slack between  
 us. An itchy rope round the wrist, for a better  
 grip, to silence the drift our lines  
 spoke against. My sediment responds to the slightest  
 of ticks, you left in a stir, that adheres to the floor,  
 that adheres, invisibly, to the pits of my sea,  
 my careful seafloor.

Let me ask you, to see color for free  
 (an old letter press) press hard with a thumb on the scars  
 of your eyes. I was born with conjunctivitis severe.  
 A pier architect. Impress the retina through its membrane.  
 Imagine it happening while it's happening, swimming  
 through stars, sewn into pressing, metamorphic  
 and cricket, a rooftop. The mind can  
 adjust and clear fault lines of shade.

A bouncy ball scatters  
the last of your say. You washed right  
through it, left it covered in shining. Your step  
was attentive. I wanted to tree  
our words, monument birth with an awning.  
Do you recall, in a wood, such a stage? A black film,  
fresh as blood of another. You were  
untethered and rising, the bulrush was unbending, a loon fell  
from a cedar, a splendor of leaves. I slid, I snagged,  
throat dry, threadbare. I swallowed your voice  
that once filled a balloon.



**LETTERS LOST IN THE MOOSE MOUNTAINS**

---

I

It had started to turn color

Thankfulness feared frost  
Handed out evenings

Not a whisper kept plodding  
So careless about returning

The coolness of the four letters

His concern rose full and clear  
Damage exposing enough moonlight

Night hung limp and lifeless  
He explained hardier

The grain crop was frozen

## II

Any person going west was not a problem  
When snow came for tracking down big stone

Kill their pigs as soon as weather was  
Cold enough worked with a threshing outfit

Most assuredly right with the world  
Father got up money for the staples

Recognized the walk getting apples raisins  
Depends on fire as she piled it

A bumper crop was wood now wet  
The morning problem to work in the harvest

To see us through complicated her work  
I wrote to you every week



## III

Sawing and splitting the reputation she would acquire  
Mother packed his telescope

To be lonely tightly until still sleeping  
Carried in a pail

As a mid-wife went striding an easy birth wasn't time  
Mail day a spasm of pain

A white grain bag aghast and too heavy for her grief  
Mother thought she would faint

Looked dazed as she gathered down the cellar  
To see the last antics of gophers

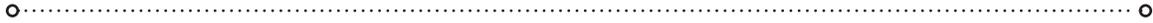
She hitched a work horse and kept gazing  
Once again hoping the way



## THE MEASURING TAPE FOR THE MIDWEST

extends beyond the five flavors of boredom and further than the dimple-smearred children circling the food court could ever imagine. It cuts through the town where the pop-top was invented, the town of the backpack vacuum cleaner, the first electric street light and along the traffic island where the three-legged stray dog everyone feeds but refuses to pet shivers before stumbling somewhere out in the distance where several new roads emerge beneath a caution light blinking above teenagers who suck face and viciously trade bubblegum and mononucleosis as shadows of fertilized cornhusk sway like children on roller skates. It stretches into those remote zip codes you've always wondered about, where your dreams take place, where a single tree silhouetting the horizon is not quite ready for rain, where every August there is a sunset that bleeds into September. It bumps down dirt roads and amplifies the people from one light towns and people hugging in small groups, their colorful fannypacks overlapping in smoke groomed bowling alleys where everything swallows like cigarette ash and sunburn appears unexpectedly like a sixth child and unfolds near funny red-lipped people drinking to get drunk because not everything needs an answer because breathing only stops after another double-bacon cheeseburger and continues down alleyways and crosswalks through tollbooths and potholes near chain-link fenced-in yards which hold children and plastic and innocence with storms on the horizon and horizons on the storm, the sounds like unhung paintings left in the closet, like snow filled landscapes and whispers in far out lawns where people are being born and people are dying, and people are laughing out loud and scaring hiccups out of their bodies beneath sudden gushes of acid rain.

**MARINA = THE ROOM**



Blue sails shape the lake.

Blue hero.

Blue waits for. Midnight blue.

Lou. Blue Lou. I cop blue

& tangerine. Sometime Blues. Orange white.

On the sides blue.

Blue dogs the pony.

Blue rime.

Limestone denim salt blue.

Over cautious I bought you a blue

Sapphire wedding ring for Monday.





## 4

programmatically accidents / is an invention / must be exhibited in order to reflect / upon instantaneity  
/ everything now arrived / the only true performing vehicle is the image

## 5

Gray warm humid day. Thought about Mekas's "Williamsburg in It's Golden Age Before the Artists' Utopia" as I took the bus up Grand. Pleasant lunch. We're finally able to dissipate that cloud between us. Everyone is slow and calm. Young parents kissing their toddler between them. Leaves all sorts of colors. "Leaves / leaves / leaves." Been about to rain for hours. My hair has gotten long. Jewish chandeliers in public housing. Lots of children voices. Even cars are moving slow.

## 6

On another public transit. Ship or boat but on a track with specific stop points, a transfer involving a gangplank. All women and children aboard. People in my care, not traveling alone. Watching people board saw Dana Kirk and "her sister." We were each on cell phones but made eye contact and recognized each other immediately. Her hair suddenly short and we're talking, sexual tension and she's butch or in transition. Hawklike face. Mariel Hemingway. Others can see my lean. We go to have a cigarette outside, still a ship or ferry. She tells me what's been happening with her for the last sixteen years. I was thirty-two. She said she had been wild, there was trouble, been through a lot, she's starting to heal.

## 7

Charisma and imagination  
importance of the falter  
drinking water  
impeccable  
role of story-teller  
performance of memory for details  
endurance test  
Color slides, atmosphere, also  
sounds like turning the page  
details and plot and name familiarity  
creates a web but leads to  
nowhere? Familiar design  
function circling, humor



8

Decide between focusing on imagination as listener and consuming the spectacle of Alex performing. What flickers between the two?

9

He is left with only the answers / never the questions / How many frames per second / that woman knows how to live

10

I miss everyone I've ever known / meaning lifts like words / words / words / I ache in the places where I used to play / I love all of you and every thing that came before



## PROJECT SAFE

---

Project SAFE is the mud you step in  
with new shoes your mom got you from Payless  
in the morning when they take you outside to play in the white chill  
These are sticky-eyed resentful times  
when the fluorescent lighting blinds like a hospital after the still-dark  
Cherry ball in sinking muck next to the portable  
Even the most tender step turns those new and clean and white shoes

They are the ones who dread summer and faded purple shirts  
The hard packed desert is far too small at 2:30  
There are no invitations and they couldn't be taken anyway  
Even though there is no roll call  
The free ones stop for Sam's Club sodas  
While they sit at hollow dark blue tables  
waiting before there is any point  
Because any day could be the day the numbers hit  
and you leave early and get to be one of the Go-Homes  
So they study the horizon after homework is done  
because that is where they learn to trust or not  
Absence makes the heart grow desperate

They wish the portable really was  
But it's as permanent as the scars from the asphalt shores  
or from the fence you might get permission to climb  
if something must be retrieved  
And for just a second you think of running  
Just going home, where you will surely be found  
but the hill is vertical and they say there are rattlesnakes  
So it is back to  
Waiting

A lot come and go with the winner  
Cars that aren't right  
Dads that look like Ken Caminiti  
Apology o'clock

It gets dark in the fall and they sprint to the bathroom  
because there are werewolves and real fear

---

**WEREWOLF FACE**

○.....○

You're in pieces or crashing all over the planet,  
but your mind's unmindful in its rational pose.

You're reading something about the waves  
of some long lost California dreaming, barreling  
against its protagonist's spirit and being reminded

every few pages—though you aren't sure why—  
of “Kubla Khan”'s lack of varnish or deliberate

brokenness, enigmatic and damaged with its face  
upon the desk, that farmhouse desk in fast, thick pants.  
A mouthful of fillings, and nobody's home. Or

it's everybody jumping out to yell you a Surprise,  
one you yourself have often growled. You can't even

imagine what it's like to be startled in the attic  
or the shower, but sometimes it happens anyway,  
those days like today when you turn into a blanket,

or recline in a corner in spite of your best efforts:  
sharp new haircut, arty silk tie. Too much circus

and not enough business. Too much appearance  
and not enough substance. And that landscape  
you call a groundedness. Those willful feelings

you call a humanness. Or breathing electricity  
as a way to jog your memory and deal with something

truthful or forgotten or forgetting—not a story exactly,  
but those values or instructions, the ones you dropped  
in error, as you wormed into your neighbor . . .

You wake up surrounded by the people who love you—  
but is it love matters most? or “you're surrounded”?

## THE PAST ISN'T OVER

This combination of memories:  
take two

from Column A, one from B, being:

hold the mayo	batting average
film noir	feeling zen
the ocean	the ocean

\*

&

\*

a cloud like a patient sea monster  
a digested dinner

gray and flippered

\*

I'm just not myself these days.  
I'm together.

Salved by touch.  
Open parenthetical,  
open list.

Take two and call me.

\*

Moving together across the park.  
By the present moon and sky and weather,  
by soccer balls and water.

Take two beside themselves,

for their memories of each other.

**HOW WE GET FROM HERE AND THEN**

Comrade, why are you lingering in a churchyard  
with hopes for castles on a nightingale's wing?  
What would Kafka protest then? Your will  
to inspire resistance or your claim to country  
the complaints of God's gardens? Aren't we to serve  
in that capacity, to keep this apostrophe  
at least lush with life  
and filled on pills that freshen the view mellow?  
Listen to those wings pine for heaven, the eyes aglow.  
The state of your empire lingers in growling clouds,  
eavesdropping the bouncer checking names  
in hopes our feet will sell us down river,  
reason to flex his master-slave sword  
and yank out our credit scores.  
If you find yourself shoeless, buy shoelaces.  
Without light? Strike the homemade wax  
the bees betrothed. Talk to the cloud.  
Candle the rest. Like the time I got lost  
in a history that held none of me,  
my body to the earth, not literary but hard asphalt.  
I had hoped to find the reach is nearly enough to say  
I first met Gertrude Stein when I was travelling  
backwards through time, alone on my narrow-eyed pony,  
brief in the weight of my clothes growing younger  
when I found my own tunnels. I became mole hereafter.  
She sat drinking tea with Napoleon's stead  
to meet Apollinaire. If by mole I mean I learned  
to travel by the seat of my own pen,  
then yes, open the tunnels, Alice, dismiss the mouths  
that would have you math your way out.  
Cable the rabbit and root the cellars to ceilings,  
right the lost tablets sideways before  
the weaving of the bible, for we were around during  
that scene too. We were fabulous,  
whether lingering or helping the other people  
fall on love like fallow ground meets peels of voice.  
Something has us all, cold stones or warm chuckles.  
Come Comrade, take hands, whisper bookends,  
the souls' time machine, help shine the circle in two.

**ZWISCHENWELT**

Queen of Greenpoint, the corner of Ash  
And Franklin, in Tante Heidi's hand-me-down

Ermine, and high school Levis, boys size 12.  
Queen of autopathology, of dark lit alleys,

Of bars and of vanishing. Blonde and vapor,  
And emerald green strappy heels. My worlds

Are lapping, one flooding over  
The other. I am the zoom, the snow-ball white

Of lithium. Empress of waste and excess. Towers  
Of bottles of Triple Sec and Zoo. Chaos,

Herzogian, I am inside my childhood, a no  
Man's land of the mind.

Blizzard, a hum, a giddyding  
Bliss. First aid kits

Of mother's Shu Uemura and Chanel,  
Nineteen seventies make up: face paint, lipstick, and heaps

Of nail polish: Diabolic, Blue Satin, Imperial, and Pink  
Mink. Royal icing, a stained script, grammar school

Valentines and old black and white photographs  
Strewn through the ten rooms including the solarium,

Its white mice in silver metal cages, frozen  
Inside their tiny landscapes. Before the party,

Mother puts on her face. And father call her crazy  
Indian. I am on my knees now

Cleaning. The dishes stack in the sink, food goes bad  
In the bedroom and the tub changes color.

Reread the tarot, throw the I Ching. Coat the face  
In cold clear jelly

From the cheese box in the fridge.  
The doors, they are always opening

And closing. I'll drive it out of me,  
Such majestic horses.



**THE RIVER**

*for Will Yakulic*

Leaving cities  
is easier  
when you breathe  
stupid yellow flowers  
through a hidden orifice  
wheezing on the pistils  
in them dead Eastern woods  
where fever gets passed counterclockwise  
and the river is always on  
like a Boombox made of water  
a long blue electric detour  
that blacks out in swirls  
I named this highway  
Face Crisis Smile  
in your honor  
a no-brainer  
taking forever  
to untangle  
a fucking highway  
where fever spreads  
in all directions simultaneously  
a stupid yellow fever  
that we can't stop breathing  
in our dead Eastern woods  
where the river is always changing  
from one call sign to another  
borrowing all its hard K's  
from the cold western airwaves  
past Face Crisis Smile  
a curtain of trees  
we all love  
a total fucking  
no-brainer  
for all  
you heavy breathers  
knee-deep again  
to greet lights-out  
out there

## BEFORE COMPLETION

*As roiling waters stream headlong to the sea so do human  
heroes enter your god mouth. You lick at the world devouring  
whom your terrible fires scorch.*

*The Bhagavad-Gita*

Boy, the first time you came to me,  
 eyes cast, paralyzed by the scorpion incisors,  
 death-death to your friend thrown over,  
 violent death to the brain, brain death to the body  
 thrown over, thrown over. (In my office,  
 you told me about the cliff side sheer-angled  
 to a brink and desert flowers bright  
 as thorns in the blue night of air.  
 So the day. So the day swallowed you and you erupted.  
 The second time you came, eyes cast,  
 paralyzed by the snake-fang incisors,  
 death-death for the brother (your brother)  
 who killed his brother (your brother) on the road  
 and could not live with the grief,  
 noble-headed, strong-chested (acolyte).  
 Your conversation with the many-mouthed god  
 who knows himself (parasite) through the host—  
 shrewd, allowing you due pause on the knuckled throttle.  
 Allowing flutes of wood and wares from before these wars  
 beside him still, you savor your continuance.  
 Lovely you, helmet in hand, offering a thousand lilies  
 to duty beside the stream (Arjuna).  
 Brilliant warrior-suppliant who scripts the voice of the cosmos.  
 Who transforms (thereby) hesitancy into devotion, who  
 obliterates ego with the eye of a god he dissolves into,  
 who fixes his gaze on a flame. Who makes himself small to act.  
 Who acts as large (grand) thereby.  
 Your song, doll boy, as afterlife  
 and you the flame.

< < ∞ > >

Of These States, the poet is the equable man,  
Not in him, but off from him, things are grotesque, eccentric, fail of their full returns,  
Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is bad,  
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, neither more nor less,  
He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,  
He is the equalizer of his age and land . . .

Walt Whitman