

Veiled Spill #1

ONE/ This is the world: we agree on that much. Spilling, they loll on their mojo here and there, hurling much to the winds. Idle. Ashing. Desperately kindled. Roasting marsh-mallowy virgins on the points of bayonets. Muffled within the uncanny. Incandescent. Not to blame. (Above all, not to blame!) Regard their beautiful mugs and wistful abs. I hobbled, veiled, among them like a vendor on the strand. Like a démodé prophet, lip-synching codas, while they stoutly maintained that Being's a self-starter, that whatever "takes place" would have done so anyway without our intervention, that politics is a reflex, superstitious behavior or else Tourette's syndrome. (This is the world, I said, and they said it didn't matter.) We better get global warming figured out toot sweet, they moaned, cranking up the AC. They did it without a blush of irony. For them, it's a no-brainer. *This is the world.* Where you can do anything. Synthesize a garden or tweet about Art. Pour concrete and sprinkle designer compost and sow exotic grasses. Draft an ars poetica on your mobile. Stock the second freezer with mice to feed the python. Where everything is superfluous like our bodies, but only an ant is more or less foolproof. I can't get them out of my kitchen. This is the weird. Where nothing helps anything.

TWO/ Veiled to the nines, I said we should cast them out.

THREE/ An Ant! An Enemy! Morning!

FOUR/ This heat reminds me of something. I was traveling incognito as a child. And this was the world, and this was America. Riding, I remember, car windows rolled down, in the back seat of the Chevy station wagon, muffled within the uncanny, through some parched provincial state—Idaho, Montana. Stopped at a budget motel, chlorine pool by the parking lot. Dove in, displaying mediocre form. Some limb too much akimbo, Father said. Floated, blissfully far from criticism. And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

FIVE/ It seemed possible I'd spilled a little sugar on the counter.

SIX/ I divide my time (now) between the cloud and the ledge. And this too is the world as seen from my brittle plenitude. (Cast it off. Loose it to the winds.) This was (is) the world in need of prayer or channeling. Anywhere—while arranging the white squares of ant traps!—you might experience a kundalini wakeup call. Divide the veil in two and pin it back. Think of the pubic bone’s halves like butterfly wings. Root down to the earth through your pelvic floor. Enjoy your teeth. Absorb your brush with breath. Be sure to wash your hands after handling the traps. The captain has turned on the sha nah nah sign. I presume we’re cleared for takeout. We’ll be on the ground in stitches.

SEVEN/ Veils on top of veils, all utterly transparent. The ants, a lot of them, had found a point of interest over by the stove. It seemed I could write it down, but nuances would vanish. Nobody would get it. I wrote what I overheard. Some consider it purloined. On the radio, journalists spoke of “driving eyeballs to the page.” I pictured (out of Buñuel or Dalí) a shepherd herding his ocular flock to pasture, then learned the phrase was only bloggerese for the effort to capture readers. For years on end, locked down in the seminar, I talked mainly to myself, but possibly it was healthy for the students to witness a female elder’s over-involvement with the text. I silently deplored their inveterate cleavage and spoke in tongues weakly from the parapet of my wimple. Discreetly, under the table, they checked their messages or IM’d fuck buddies. This is the world and this is human endeavor. He created an index card for each of his lovers, including a coded notation of penis size. She used the pen name Adonis for her man-on-man porn, but still couldn’t get an agent. She had a flawed idea of male arousal or possibly just the market. Note I said *sow* not *spill* (I meant the seed). While walking in the garden near the lacinato kale, I came upon a woman in a tank top. One shapely limb was raised above her head and what took away my breath (but only figuratively speaking) was the swirled tuft of hair licking up from the delicate hollow. I worshipped ventry briefly in her sexual penumbra, as beads of water clung in the dimpled surfaces of cruciferous vegetable foliage. This was the world, where what I wanted didn’t count. “Shave your eardrums.” What was that you said. Oh, underarms. Armpits. Pluck your eyebrows while you’re at it. How do you “thread” an eyebrow? And how do you decide between “sow” and “spill”? Which do you do with seed? (Or—“sew” the seed, a frill.)

EIGHT/ The ants boil up through pinpoint holes between the counter tiles. I should be thinking of grouting, caulking.

NINE/ It didn't matter what I wanted, nothing helps anything. A tummy tuck, a water cure, a pose on a sticky mat. Mad ants got into my stash of medjool dates. Extinction kept unfurling in the wings. This was the world and it was dying, blatantly. Had been at it so long I'd sort of gotten acclimated. From Day One, my lullaby had been, "Wake not the sleeping aporia. Mind the hypoxic zone." Gaily decked out in mufti, one perceives no need for corsets. "And why would you need to put full makeup on just to read *The Idiot and Theodicy*?" Thus barricaded calmly within the wiki burqa, we loll and spill and sow and toil and maim, maintaining (startled, sorry, reminiscent) that Being's a self-starter, that direct action is the whippet of the masses, that nothing takes place because of our tenderness. Thus do we palpate romance.

TEN/ The exterminator came in the heat of the afternoon: round-bodied, graying, wearing a dark blue uniform. He mopped his brow and spoke of the End of Days in a light West Indian accent. "I don't know how religious you are, but there's a man on the radio, maybe you've heard about him—he predicts that on May 11 of next year...that's when He is coming to establish His kingdom. If that is true, our time is *very* short." "But what do *you* think?" I wanted to know, always a sucker for eschatology. The exterminator paused, re-positioning his nozzle. He appeared to be a man who took pride in his work. "I pay close attention when it says in the Bible: 'You will know not the day nor the hour.' I don't see how anyone *could* know a thing like that." While I was making out the check, he noticed my funny aloe plant, deformed by its affinity for indirect light. "Back home on my island, we break off a piece for any cut, bruise, or sting. That's your pharmacy right there."

ELEVEN/ She walks these hills in a long black limousine. She walks these hills in a crumpled Humvee. She walks these hills in a rusty old beater. She walks these hills in a knockout static kill. She walks these hills in a billowy blind shear ram. She walks these hills in a skimpy blowout preventer. Baby doll, baby doll.

TWELVE/ I wondered: what would happen to the sky?

THIRTEEN/ Within its wild veil, the gritty scatter of the belly. This was the world. Why are they hurting it here? (And so I hunkered down and played with fire.) It strikes me

that I know so very little in the round, about creation's lumps and lunges, all its sore latitudes. That humming umbilical engine, under-girding everything, muffled within the din of spill&cleanup. (And so I hunkered down and burned with art.) A gulf is a gulf of relations—this much was clear to me, though I'm not even a woman in the regular sense (for instead of multiplying, I want to be alone, protected by the thick, opaque curtains of sentences that enfold my face and body). It was just water. It was just trees. It was just grass. It was just time. It was there for the living and I've never forgotten, here in my cloistered purview, no longer beset by ants, whose antics made me think of the old-fashioned raves my students used to frequent. Everyone would rush to find a party in some warehouse and their rushing in a crowd *was* the party. "I used to walk to the self along with others" (Darwish). I'm missing them already though they drove me up the wall when I found them in my oatmeal, in my tea. In Spain the pretty bimbos sported fabulous torture-shoes, adorable balls and arches lifted up in flagrant pedi-crucifixions over Roman paving stones. Newspapers filled their pages with debates about the banning of a simple facial garment. I hiked through art museums full of annunciations, flayings. Flew home (enlarging my carbon footprint) and found much the same—cheap amalgam of racialized hooey and imperial conflagration. Autos de fé. Everything twice as tacky as it was before lunch. Why were they hurting it here? I prophesied. I veiled. *I came too late to drive the demons out.*

FOURTEEN/ This was the world: belly-land, belly-sea. A bayoneted cradle was blocking the road. Earth lay before me, disemboweled to the horizon. It didn't matter what I wanted.

FIFTEEN/ I spilled and spilled.

SIXTEEN/ I wanted the world to live.