

the book of
redacted
paintings

ARTHUR KAYZAKIAN



for my father, mother, and brother

In the dark
a burglar
stares at the painting

—*Garous Abdolmalekian*
Tr. By Ahad Nadalizadeh & Idra Novey

unnũ (home)

The night I kissed my father on his cheek,

his smile,
glazed with the scent of smoke and bravado,

softened.

Not even silence has a name for that.

Contents

տոմս (HOME)	1
EXPO 1	7
DEAR READER,	8
EXILED: LOS ANGELES	10
TURNING ROAD	11
CASE REPORT SUMMARY	
INVESTIGATION OF THE WALL	14
ARMENIAN FOLK DANCE, 1915	15
FATHER AND SON ON A BRIDGE	16
MY FATHER UNDER THE STARS, 1979	17
RAIN	18
THE ART RESTORATION CENTER	19
MY FATHER UNDER THE STARS, 1979	20
MELINDA	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAINTINGS THAT NEVER MADE IT TO THE WALL	22
SONNET OF MY GRANDFATHER THE ORIGINAL ԿԱՅՏԱԿ	23
REMOVED ART	24
STAIN ON THE WALL	25
EXPO 2	26
TEHRAN	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAINTINGS THAT NEVER MADE IT TO THE WALL	28

ANNIVERSARY	29
PLEASE ASK	30
DEAR INVADER	31
THE TOAST	33
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVIVAL	34
MY [] IS	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAINTINGS THAT NEVER MADE IT TO THE WALL	36
READING WITH MY FATHER	37
THERE IS NO WORD FOR THIS NAME	38
THERAPY	41
DEAR ████████████████████	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAINTINGS THAT NEVER MADE IT TO THE WALL	44
GALAXIES	45
QUESTIONS TRUTHS AND LIES ON ART TRAUMA	47
NOCTURNAL	50
THIS HALLOWEEN	51
NOTES ON ART AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF EXECUTION	53
I SANG	56
SYNONYMS FOR MAPS	57
FAITH	58
WHEN WE FLED IRAN	59
MAGIC SHOW	60
EXPO 3	62
VESPERS	63
FLOCK COLLECTION	64
THE VERDICT OF THE BIRD	65

EXPENSIVE PORTRAITS	66
JUST BECAUSE MY FATHER WAS NEVER PAINTED DOESN'T MEAN THE PAINTING DOESN'T EXIST	68
PORTRAIT OF MY FATHER'S DISSOLUTION	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAINTINGS THAT NEVER MADE IT TO THE WALL	71
ELEGY FOR ARSHILE GORKY	72
TRANSLATION	74
DIASPORA	75
MY [] IS	76
BIRTHDAY POEM	77
DEAR [REDACTED]	78
THE CRAFTSMAN	80
ANNA WALINSKA	81
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	83
END NOTES	88

EXPO I

I tore the first world out of this book.
Do you see birds flying out of the holes in my song?

Dear Reader,

Today I haven't thought about killing myself.
Maybe because this week I have felt like smoke.

I know it's strange, but
most of my desires turn to ash,
the aftermath of what burns.

I could end it all.
The mortgage, the deadlines, the apologies.

Everything feels like a painting.
Instead of sleeping I am waiting for the sun.

The unfolding of a world I taste faintly on my tongue,
like rain, but it dissipates the way dreams do

before they ask us to believe
in the planets embedded in our bones.

Sometimes I am the cousin of a mirror,
I look like the surface of a lake when spoken to.

At times I am an anthology of hellos.

Thus, I offer you this walking.
Have a seat. Let me show you what's on my mind.

I apologize in advance,
since I will ask you to see things that do not exist.

You may encounter art that lives
in a world that could have been.

Even a pane of glass will become a painting.
You will want to ask it: Why is the earth hanging outside my window?

Of course, there are things I regret.

Sometimes I am a dress torn from its hanger,
you can tell by the way I failed
to say I love you.

Exiled: Los Angeles

We fled from green oil tanks and the scent of chemicals,
from fire bluster and windows rattled by gunfire.

We fled to make poems out of cemeteries
and write prose out of psalms.

Here, our windows are stained with promise.
Our prayers are made of glass.

From a confiscated garden infested with guards,
we fled to an army of daffodils.

We fled and we fled from Allah
burning in the trees, from gutted staircases

and swollen buildings sinking to the sand.
We fled from the parade of sirens.

Here, at night, dogs bark in the junkyard.
Our hands up against the wall,

we have been taught we die without one another.
What do we know of love?

Turning Road

After the unfinished work of Paul Cezanne

before you omit that meth pipe
stare at the wall in front of you

the one coated with paint to jacket the cracks
and the layers of paint before it

the painting that went missing a colophon
almost visible like a shadow's shadow

energy in the shape of a picture frame
of something taken hanging on the wall

before you omit that meth pipe
while you stare at this missing painting

take another hit and don't quit today
reach into your fresh pack of cigarettes

spark up your crispy cherry
savor the sweet taste of burnt ash

how cigarettes dislocate you from responsibility
its taste not quite sugar but close enough

yes—don't quit today
I know your bills are unpaid

I know your lips tremble
you smile and it feels like jolting a dead camel

and someone next to you says
it smells like a burnt light bulb

you believe the sky has a place for you
the roots of your hair follicles answer to lightning

vapor swirling in the glass bowl
a solar system making your stomach turn

I know you wonder how you turned into a vacuum
that hole inside you a tunnel you fall for every time

someone busts out the glass piece with the blue flame
smoke shimmies its way into your mouth

and your ribs speak to you
the way they insist your hunger

and press against the thin bones of your chest
how meth makes your digestive system electrify your blood

makes you want to take a shit
fumigate the prayers stuck in your throat

and when you walk down the hall to your partner
the one with red hair and glitter frosted around her eye sockets

and a t-shirt with the words "ravaged city"
tell her not to leave

say you're down say you're afraid say you're in love
say you're tired of walking in circles

sing the song you're afraid to when you're not in the shower
hold her hand and tell her *it's not worth it*

let's not do it let's just stay
tell her that significant events overlap

in a star lightyears away from earth
say something say anything

so you don't have to quit
so you don't have to remember

the way her car wrapped around the tree
and when the cops arrived

they identified remains of a painting
lodged in what was left of the back seat

Case Report Summary
Investigation of the Wall



Evidence:

Specimen A: 3.7 kg of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen

Notes: Weight denotes a molecular structure imprinted on the wall after burglary.

Specimen B: DNA of a shadow on a panel of glass

Notes: Sample suggests the burglar's shadow brushed the living room window at room temperature.

CLUES:

Audible: i want to feel [REDACTED] repeated on a record player

Visible: a half scratched dark scar



WITNESSES & STATEMENTS:

Dishwasher: I didn't see anything.

Door: I didn't see anything.

Window: I didn't see anything; something must have slipped through me.

Room Temperature: I didn't see anything, but the allegory of my light particles has a debt to settle with the wall.

Wall: I want to feel whole again.

Armenian Folk Dance, 1915

A man and woman hide in their home
to dance amid lit candles.

He kneels as she twirls
around him.

She raises both arms in the half-
light, and the shadow of her hands—

a bird in flight—brushes the wall.

If this were any other day, she would
clap to the beat of the drum.

She tiptoes to keep quiet
from the crows outside the window

roosting upon crucifixes
that go on, row after row.

Father and Son on a Bridge

1.

the black and white photograph tells a story
of a bridge with a horizon that threads
a disconcerted skyline and lake
where a father and son throw stones
naked trees in a bone-contorted winter
twist their branches upward
and lean over them like a frozen prayer
on the son's lips the words are hard
but we cannot know what is said
what we see is the lake's stillness
and the reflection of uncovered branches
blooming in the underworld of the photograph

2.

this I tell you stranger my father
is a blackswell of hand gestures
the way his hands move grounds my history
a kind man of natural servitude
he is the weight of shame I carry
and yet what is far inside him
stands beside me throwing stones

3.

the lake in the photograph
contains the reflection
of an upside-down world
the boy leans over the bridge
his words heavy in his throat
his father upright next to him
what if we removed the lake
nothing to mirror or root
we'd have here an image of nature
without the adversity beneath it