

# sex & violence

Kristy Bowen



i.

the inventions of the monsters

## little blue dog song no. 1

Sometimes, you die of such blueness, a mere smudge of the thumb across canvas. Dive right through layers of oil with a palette knife. We are all about waiting and weariness. Something beautiful and French and therefore untouchable as a woman's breast. If I kill it, I can name it. Can kick the tiny dog again and again until he turns to smoke and blows away. My finger lingers on the window ledge in a French apartment with its French mice lingering in the traps. Their death beautiful and horrible and still undeniably French. I am waiting with a screwdriver behind the wardrobe's mirrored doors. I am waiting for the bite.

## little blue dog song no. 2

You are my very favorite devil, my favorite delight. The hinge in the middle of my body that opens to a room full of forgotten phone books. The strange species that quarries and worries over classified ads and classic cars. Such spaciousness is terrifying, a thick black open of the interior. The dark spreads its tentacles along the infrastructure, sings like static of a lobby tv set. The rough weather of my spine takes up a lot of space, but I can recite nursery rhymes by memory, honey my voice to a whisper. Gust and swarm until there is nothing left but the gas station adjacent to the all-night market. The single bulb above the pump. The single leash hooked on the wall.

### little blue dog song no. 3

From this vantage point, all the animals are on fire. All the women piled with armfuls of broken statues and blood on their lips. I do not know what the horsewomen say when their nerves spit and zing. The inevitable movement of their hands to their mouths cupped with water. Only, that I'm speaking in metaphor, in metaphysics. The slick tongue of a butterfly in a jar. Only that I laugh, because I could die laughing here, with singed hair and the water rising way too slow. From this vantage point, I could turn my face away from him, but there is something terrible at my elbow. It pinches my wings and sings me to sleep.

## little blue dog song no. 4

The cat angel cries all night, mewling and spitting for milk. I don't have the patience for anything but this—the long, slow roll toward Bethlehem. But then again, none of us are getting out of this alive. The woman with her hive of hair. The burning giraffe. Everyone drinking tea and going on and on about art. Even the little blue dog knows the jig is up with the mountains on fire and this creeping dread. It touches everything my fingers touch, but then again my fingers touch everything. The burning landscape, the space behind the cat angel's ears. He purrs and the clouds catch fire above us.

## little blue dog song no. 5

A couple more seconds, and I could disappear into this landscape. Disappear into the green and blue sky. My legs dissolving into mist, my body into architecture. No sooner have I placed myself against the horizon and gazed into the distance than the wilderness is at my heels. Beyond. Behind. Between. My hip jutting toward the west. But then who knows which way is west? Who knows which way the narrative runs, sun-quenched and obvious. The grass is greener here, lusher than I expected. My thoughts are olive colored and dusty. A couple more seconds and the shadows change, igniting the horizon and the back of my skirt.

## little blue dog song no. 6

The desert is full of monsters. Full of mornings emptied of their contents—a small stone, a wash of blue. The bones inside the torso are visible only to the vultures just off screen. Just off the coast, where the loneliest women drop head into hands, the flax of their hair twisting into curls. The desert is full of landmarks—lurching gods with sand in their mouths and the strange hum of broken glass. This wreckage of animal bones, busted spoons, the rusted tools buried just deep enough to disappear forever. Here, where the desert is full of mouths. Full of desert, full of rough, rainless sky.

## little blue dog song no. 7

I am planning my escape strategy for when the lights go out. What wilderness pushing at the seams of me, gibbous and full. Never mind this chalk drawing I call my inner self. The tiny bell-shaped indent beneath my sternum. I say “hello” but what I want to say is “You have too many hands, sir.” One is on my throat and the other inching up my thigh. My voice is shriller than I mean it be. I once dropped an ice cube into hellfire and it came back a river. Your hourglass keeps draining on the half hour and has started catching fire from the brimstone. I say, “You’re beautiful.” But what I mean is, “I’m dying.”