

PINE TO SOUND

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Echo's Voice	1
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I

Morning Provisional	5
Talking Points	6
Conflagration	7
On Hearing Voices	8
Fray	10
Hysteria	11
Catalog and Lexicon	12
txt	14
Aside	15
Echo's Body	16
Little Winter Theater	18

II

Mnemonic	21
Ring	24
Melancholia	25
On Seeing the Dead	27
Network, Constellation	29
Mercury Retrograde	30
Love Story	32
Dress	33
Broken Rib	34

Roof	35
Holograph	36
Snapshots	37
Ordinary Unhappiness	40
The Nocturnal Factory	41
Grieving Narcissus	43

III

Midnight Continuous	47
Night Swimmers	48
Language of Mirrors	49
Hysteria	50
Waiting, with Prayer	51
Planetary Discourse	53
If Breath is an Occasion for Memory	55
Lapse	56
Between	57
What I Thought When I Was Falling	58
Reckoning	59
Devotion	61
Charms against the Ghost	62
Nightly	66
NOTES	68

Echo's Voice

barefoot and stricken and stumbling
I stutter when you ask at your very
command all the same I let ferocity
creep in at the edges I bark and bawl
until I'm hoarse and irrelevant ready
to slip back into the dark hollow
my throat this is waiting and
won't you just say it this is muddled
desire repeating itself turning bone
to stone to air to silence spine and
hip my square collarbone when
did we become only sharp and
shattered utterance fierce signals
in the shifting center wings waves pages
perhaps it would be better to stop
here to quit before nothing is left but
soaring cruel and compelling come in
we continue we splinter we slide
in treacherous sequence echo speaks
first return returning refrain resounding
voice voice voice and oh how I listen

Morning Provisional

It might collapse at any moment, the room;
might come apart at the seams. Drifts in mist

in rain; wind shook everything, almost shook
everything loose. A man on the radio says

vulnerability assessment says *gap analysis*.

Or he calls: years-away voice. Tilting

precarious above the street. Carry on
at late morning coffee, hover over the paper,

tabled. Already it's clear how each story
ends. Trees knock branches to glass; wasps

let themselves in without asking. And letters
pile by the door in luminous envelopes.

There is fracture and there is repair. Call or
letter; riddle or time machine. Weeks of storm

and uncertainty and now splintering sun
delivered through clouds. A bell, a cue,

the hinge in the narrative. Where pieces
came together. The phone might be

an instrument of desire or a means of
containment; a letter might be a compass.

When it turns back on itself like this, the sky
says *look away; pretend the end is not upon you.*

Talking Points

Wasps through the crumbling casement, droning
and sudden, like riddles spilling from gaps
 between ribs;

well-dressed walls mimic they camouflage they
telescope: plaster split open where the nails went in;

and again and always you plot by suggestion you
 parallel you
shimmer bright you eventually you finally give way;

photograph of a trim and toothless jungle,
 unkept promise
of a wild atmosphere—how it cuts me decisively loose;

nevertheless you continue, you calculate axis
 and distance
and revolution in minutes in hours (there is no
 other way);

then evening finds us (oxygen blooming storm
 black and
heaving threat); it owns what we said to the last
 sentence:

in this room and certain others fists of lightning break
 open and
rain falls in fervent curtains when I close the door
 behind me.

Conflagration

All at once. What do they say? One fell swoop. All my pretty ones. You take it in. I remember the conflagration and your causal interest in the ashes. Hush before the blaze; crisp instant demanding heat. Then I recognized your ambition. Trap carefully laid; so far and wide the days that devised it. In this moment, in our private nostalgia for Tuesday, we weary, we reach, we want with might to shatter. Flames confirm our sense that something was about to happen. Is about to happen. More. Daily anticipation. All the same that iridescent, that instantaneous. And more. Embers smolder and smoke, ignite. And still here we are both breathing. Even wrecked, the boundaries mark something. I haven't forgotten what your eye can do.

On Hearing Voices

The hand and what we catch hold of. Point
always to the far edge. And the story
of bones perfectly and cleanly

broken. Now the clear blue context
rushes, slips through, spilling
away in streams in swift rivulets.

— —

Once-familiar sound, distinct
and distant as bells at the hour.

This recognition, this broken-
lung return finds every patience
in the living body. Fills even
the otherwise agreeable mouth.

— —

The dead keep talking, each syllable
churns and grinds, persuasive as axel
and singing gears, steady as a machine.

— —

Empty apartment where moss
and mushrooms grow greenblack and
brown in the decay of the refrigerator.

Tree limbs break in, reaching.
The final crumbling
is hastened by even the smallest noises
setting down their unbearable weight.

— —

Time has fingers
like knives. Talking
and not harmless;
the ghost at the edge
of everything.

And the nervous system crackling.

Fray

my suspended second story
tilts keen and madly swaying
wild a ship's transom untethered
this is winter so like a tear
a worn patch in the fabric
skin showing through
the day endures tangle
bears consequence and the room
the lopsided room ready
to crack open wide this is
winter unraveling and if I am
almost pinned by skeletal light
by cross-pane shadows the hour
at least is set steady stretched
tight and unyielding by sure strokes
cast slender those dark dark threads