

TAKE  
THIS  
STALLION

POEMS

ANNAÏS  
DUPLAN

*Take This Stallion*

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ISBN-13: 978-1-936767-45-8

Cover design by Alban Fischer. Edited by Joe Pan. Interior by Joe Pan & Ben DuVall.

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Published in the United States of America by:

Brooklyn Arts Press

154 N 9th St #1

Brooklyn, NY 11249

WWW.BROOKLYNARTSPRESS.COM

INFO@BROOKLYNARTSPRESS.COM

Distributed to the trade by Small Press Distribution / SPD

[www.spdbooks.org](http://www.spdbooks.org)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Duplan, Anaïs.

Title: Take this stallion / by Anaïs Duplan.

Description: First edition. | New York : Brooklyn Arts Press, 2016.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015028527 | ISBN 9781936767458 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Classification: LCC PS3604.U654 A6 2016 | DDC 811/.6--dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015028527>

FIRST EDITION

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△ said to ■, “Did I hit an animal back there?”

■ said, “No, don’t look back.”

# AN ACCOUNT OF A CHILD BORN ALIVE WITHOUT A BRAIN AND THE OBSERVABLES IN IT UPON DISSECTION

I wept for the suffering of dolphins. By that  
I mean the cicadas, by that the rained-over slices  
of bread on the gravel, the birds that mistake

car antennae for homes. Do you recall  
the words that god said. No.  
How could you. It was all in tongues

and arms and legs. It was all  
in those children's hearts, the screamers.  
No more solutions. Only this:

my severed arms. Someone has severed me  
for stealing the merchant's peaches.  
Someone has hanged me

on a public street for slander. A common  
mishearing. I said, There is no  
hare on the moon, and they heard,

the tribunal heard. There is no end  
to your hunger and fasting, and fastening  
the rope, the reaper told me.

The mechanic told me to smile.  
I did. He showed me his tongue.

# **BLACKNESS, WHICH WAS ALWAYS MOVING**

In trembling over the damp  
petal-mound, palm-cupped,  
I could not but cry out,  
stricken as the bird  
who sees finally itself  
reflected in the careful  
accident of a bramble-knot.

# THE FOYER FOREVER

Who is dead in the ambulance.

Is it you or me or one of our friends.

Answer me this: Who is dead in the foyer.

Who is dead on the sidewalk. Who, at the stoplight,  
has left us. Who has jumped from the water  
tower and left a note that said, Thanks

but I did not care for the weather. Thanks

but there is no need to call an ambulance.

Do you ever look for bodies on the water  
or do you prefer to have fun with friends.

I saw a man blow a man at the stoplight.

Blow him to pieces. How many die in the foyer

at the hospital. In the foyer

of my apartment, I give my thanks

to the mold growing on the windows. Stop, light.

What time does it come, the ambulance.

I want to be sure to tell my friends

to come around once in a while to water

the hydrangeas. Or are they peonies, who cares. Water  
whatever agrees to stay alive. Do not dwell in the foyer

unless to asphyxiate. No need, my friends,

for thanks and praise. We kill ourselves off selflessly. Thanks

be to god who does not dial for an ambulance

when the children are sick. I made a mistake at the stoplight.



I thought they were making love and could not stop. Light punctures of intercourse. O genital fountain, spray thine water upon my grave. Who is dead up against the fence. Ambulance, you have taken far too long. I left a note in the foyer that read, Thanks but I did not care for the food. Thanks but there is no need to alert my friends—

they know. Remember, my friends,  
it is near impossible to stop light  
from entering you. Withhold your thanks  
until the deed is done. Floating on the water,  
you can sometimes spot a loved one. A foyer  
full of guestbooks and black-gowned beasts. Ambulance,

do not come for me. Save my friends. Ambulance,  
when will your engine stop? The light in the foyer, the light foyer—  
In the night, I gave thanks to the water all around me, the water.

# *LA VUELTA*

Hoping to start a riot,  
the boy went on revealing his ankles  
to the grazing stallions.  
The animals bulged  
in the sun and were blinded  
by the sun. The boy's ankles were taut  
and red. The animals grazed  
in the sun and the boy  
went on revealing his ankles  
to the grazing stallions, hoping  
to start a riot.

I once saw men riot when a woman  
lifted her long black skirt.  
He showed the way his ankle-bones  
bulged and the men bulged  
in the sun, and took to chasing  
the boy, who went dashing, his skirt flapping, down  
a lean alley, and evaporated.  
When she was lost to them  
they took to striking  
each other over the head with empty fists,  
striking until blood ran freely in the city  
ditches. All of this sounding like horses thundering  
into each other, peeling themselves  
off of each other, and thundering  
again. The whole city, this sound.

# WHY WOULD YOU EVER GO TO A POOL PARTY ANYWAY

I.

Anaïs, you needn't cry  
like a baby seal. You needn't wear  
your hair long, just to divert  
the passing sailors—

    O what flag waves outside the windows  
of all fledgling girls  
when they detect  
what lives  
between their legs.

    John Paul once said to me,  
O Anaïs, o Anaïs, what lives between your legs,  
and I opened up to him, put his hand inside me  
and said, This is the fiery throat of God—be careful.  
You may find you are no longer every-  
thing you had been  
before you arrived.

II.

He said, she said, we wrote of a great awakening.  
Instead of death we only moaned  
every time the sun did wane and how  
it waned every morning. Today could be  
the day that does not end  
in your death-  
ly embrace.

**ANAÏS DUPLAN** was born in Jacmel, Haiti. She is the director of a performance collective called The Spacesuits and of The Center for Afrofuturist Studies, an artist residency program in Iowa City. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Birdfeast*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Journal*, [*PANK*], and other publications. She is an MFA candidate at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

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