

VERONICA BENCH

Leopoldine Core

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Coconut
Books

For Claire Lucido

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THE FOREST

TENDER

You bite into an orange and it plays Beatles songs

all the sad ones

You can hear all the spit

in George Harrison's mouth

there's a hiss

You love how he loved God

the man he couldn't have

as opposed to the women

he had endlessly

the women

you would've hated them too

had you been a man

beautiful

with your guitar.

You want *bis* Jesus

not some loser's Jesus

weird nectar

guy in the park

It's tantric

rock is

sweetly begging

by the water.

It's like auditioning for devotion

Let me know you

Let me know you

Is it the flesh of God
or your own mouth
waiting like women
around your teeth

wish for entry
wish not to be a bastard
wish for the weird rainbow
the cliff

Let me know you

Let me know you

Let me in

PENNIES

I feel so pessimistic right now.

I think it's the right way to feel.

You look like someone riding in a stagecoach

and I'm like a savage who stuck her head in the window

my eyebrows flirting

and pleading.

You keep giving me money

but never the whole amount.

I guess you like me

I mean

you're paying

for my desire.

I guess I'm sort of

defeatist

young at the end.

Gimme that penny

that one over there

it's sticking into me

Just gimme a second

I'm trying to fashion
a response
I can hear your smile
on the phone
because you have a memory
many
of my ass out on a cliff
It makes anything funny
my shit glisten
it makes breakfast funny
a table
the moon is funny
It's a nightmare. Here it is.

TODD

I didn't know you died until like yesterday
You were so beautiful

like a fox with dessert
on both shoulders

Is that creepy to say?

I don't think so

I mean
your body
is gone

MORNING COCKTAIL

I was so soft and vulnerable
so it was like shooting heroin.
inserting death into
the morning.
the eggs were a little wiggly
and gross and I was alone.
I remember the sky was bright grey
with pink ebbing up
and someone's newspaper
hung over the table.
someone young
looked old in the
white-green glare.
it was early to get turned on
but that's how it happens
to me. I looked away
from the eggs and tipped
into a tiny film
of someone's dick

shooting glue on me.
I say some but I mean several.
not a group but there were a lot
of men pulsing in one face
and my clit fattened
under my blue jeans
and I was nineteen
and depressed.
just stuck in the dark
pining for things
the green-white light
like a finger at night
just flesh I couldn't
kiss.
my blood was full
of little porno films
and I think love too.
I think I loved you.

CHAIR

Baltimore is the darkest place
it's basically been fucked with
damp houses

meat in the trees

And you are the world's most
intrepid salesman

Energy

that's what you have
instead of Harvard.

You make me feel

like a kitten

with a wallet

with a wallet

But the sun is strange

pencil light pouring

out of a hole and

I can't move in this house

someone's life

is still here

the bed is warm

with it.

Why do I go on the internet

when everywhere else

is heaven?

Even the torture

of watching my hand

in the bathwater

Even the flat silver

light of Baltimore.

I came here

I thought it was free

I wanted to write poetry

God was in a car in the sky

and I shouted my arm is so weak

and he said I know

it's like a toothpick holding a machine

and I saw his face for a minute

Satan's bacony lips

It wasn't God

just some confident animal

in a car

And the trees were

kind of purring

And I noticed my legs

were gone.

We're like something

that camps out

in your home

here is the chair

here is the door

opening

the glare of light

on your tongue

heaven touches me

again

the text

is its own animal

panting

in the dark.

CANOE

the word canoe is practically a feeling.

THE MOST

manipulative thing
I have ever done
is I was walking
down the street with a man

we passed a beautiful pot of flowers
and I said look

because
he was beautiful.

I knew that saying look would make him
look

I knew that he would bend down
to smell the flowers

and it would be the most beautiful person

to ever
smell flowers.

Since then there have been more beautiful people.
I met the most beautiful person in the world.

But I remember his beauty because
it was the main thing.

I remember holding it
in the jar of my eye

perfect mouse.

I remember that he did not like
to be beautiful
this way

like a mouse.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

is channel

the 1970s

and you're

automatically

hot!

HAPPINESS

wait you actually feel terrible
when your anus is inside out
& dragging behind you
& birds are pecking out your eyes
& little men
& big men
are stabbing you with forks.

KISSING

Guess who I'm making the face of.

Clint Eastwood.

No a young scientist.
Ok who's this?

Charles Manson.

No a sharp pencil.
Ok what's this?

A breast.

It's a horse.
Who's this?

A college boy.

No a puppy.
Who's this?

A librarian.

No
that was God.
Who's this?

A cowboy.

No
it's a disillusioned younger brother.
Ok what am I thinking?

That you love me.

No. I wasn't thinking that.
Do you know how old I am?

No.
You told me once but I can't remember anything
that's a number.

I'm 27.

There's no point in telling me.
I won't remember.

What *do* you remember?

How things look.
What people are wearing.
Colors.

Oh that's nice.

Are you making fun of me? I can never tell.

Well sometimes—like right now
I'm making fun of you
while also
being sincere.
Maybe that
is just plain
sincere.

What is?
What is just plain sincere?

Having two galaxies.
One head.

MEATY

You know he was a fag.

You say that about everyone.

Well it's important.

WEIRD AIR

time feels full
but it's not full

it's full of fear

ONE NIGHT

you were stumbling into bed
with a bowl of yogurt
to watch Mary Tyler Moore
drunk
and you hit your head on the wall

you were so delicate
you got black eyes
real bad ones
red-yellow
blue

you didn't know then
or maybe you knew
you'd be the rat king

you

BETTER THE NEXT DAY

me curled up
naked on
a turkey pan

doing this

VIDEOTAPE

Here is an egg at the window
Here is my bobcat head on your knee
Here I am staring past you at a memory
I'm squinting because it's true
that writing ruins memories
melts and replaces them.
I have one now in my mouth
something soft and defaced from 1998
I was young so there was
plenty of room
for him.
I was a purse
I once wrote.
He liked females
but needed men.
They were always huddling
around the fire in awe of each other.
One of them owned a video camera
and he taped me squatting over a

hole in the earth—there's a video
somewhere

of the hour

I am now gutting

with text.

But I remember him

holding the camera.

And I remember

the love

beating

between them.

The big male gaze like a sunset

pouring onto another man.

I remember being naked

in the woods

and actually very turned on

and thinking straight men

never get over their homosexuality

because they never acknowledge it.

All of them sniffing around

for a purse.

Someone wrecked by drugs

but new too.

I never wrote then

but I would imagine

writing. I would imagine

the words and let them dissolve.

PLEASE INCLUDE

YOUR DAUGHTER

IN YOUR VISION

OF HER

and the sound

would

stupidly

stay in my head

like a t-shirt

or a sticker on a car.

It's hard to believe I was her

and now me, walking around

with a skull full of videotapes.

It's hard to believe I could

love a man who loved

a little girl.

RACE TRACK

Sometimes getting your genitals spit on is really hot
and sometimes you feel like the sidewalk.

STUPID SATURDAY

im in a cave

without a keyboard

rubbing two rocks

together

AND HE IS JUST LIKE ME

I was not praying.
I was reading my poems to myself when God entered.
He was like so many people
who come near me.
He was an old man in a wheelchair
He had a rifle over his knees
And in the same breath he was a
young woman
young like me and watching.

You think I'm ridiculous, I said.

No. I think you're cunning. I'm crazy about you.

But why? I asked.

It's your thoughts. Your intolerance to heat. Your body complains loudly wherever it goes.

But why would you love that? I asked.

I don't know, God said. It's what I have to love.

Then he pointed to a picture of me
in his wallet
There you are suffering, he said. I love your frailty. It's like *lace*.

And this gave me a dirty feeling
And I looked into the pair of eggs
and the old man peeled away
like a mood
Then God was just an alien with no genitals at all
I love your fragile veins it said
that's the feel of them
guitar strings
I love that you are dying it said with panting nostrils

right now
you are dying
and it gets me
off.

WHITE TRASH INTELLIGENTSIA

that baby thing i have
is dimming
but i remember who was around
when i was still a baby
and i was poor
and mostly i remember you.

i guess you were
sort of down on yourself
but that seemed kind of
like a lie.

i mean
the masochist
is always
a motherfucker

on some other level.

your name
also sounded
not true

kind of faux criminal
like you were making fun
of the lower class
but titillated too.

i remember that
i was more into your body
than your art
because it was all a form
of kitschy cruelty

just collections of teenagers
and the squadron of people

who feel their genitals.

just kids who grew up
where you didn't grow up

and some swarthy men
peppered in.

it's like rich kids are born
with a camera
and that's their job

quietly torturing animals
in a mansion.

BIRDS COME HERE

to shit

well

just one

hawk

THE WHEEL

To be a little absent
suggests you have
something better
going on.

So what.

I'm addicted
to your vagueness

who you'll be today

a man
or a woman

someone
or no one

perhaps several people
sitting in a chair

Maybe you make me
feel human
just sitting there

It solves the problem
of intimacy—it's pale tedium
just marry one
tortured
head.

I'm not any more human
but I feel my blood in this climate
of shadows and the flow
of light in your mouth

your little head relaxed
your quietness
your brain
pumping
on the pillow

The peach light
holds you
the surreality
of the 60s

a bothness
like soda
the ocean
the light.

FAMILY

You have five orphans in your apartment.

I know. And I haven't even had my childhood.

So what will you do?

Die.

And what will we do?

You'll die too.

PUCKERED

The shape of your loss

is opening

is exegesis

the bible

the internet

Anything

that keeps

unfolding

EGG

There was a tiny baby goat in a carriage
and the inside of the carriage was yellow.

The wicker had been painted or maybe
there was a blanket

and both goat parents were standing
by the carriage gazing

into all that yellow.

They were saying look
at her. LOOK AT HER

and their goat eyes were shining.

She would be a poet they chanted.
And she would paint.
She would be very beautiful.

She is already so beautiful.

And she would be a scientist.
And she would be a witch.
And she would be an astronaut and a tap dancer.
And she would be a runner.
And she would sing songs.
And she would be very funny.
And she would be a goat.

FRIDAY

in a bed of pain

food is

i don't know

an angel.

NO ONE THING

I was flatlined
just a row of flattened daisies

I thought I'll never be rich
not really rich

I was reaching for the lamp
my hand was weak
with sex

I was trying
not to trap
your aura

the thing that's escaping

when self-
consciousness
is pierced.

I just lied there.
I'm still

lying there.

The night is brown
The palm trees are gnarly

it's LA's fantasy
about itself.

We keep joking
about the apocalypse
because it's here

all the time.

I don't believe in karma
do you?

do politicians have karma?

I guess their karma
is our karma.

I've always liked today
better than tomorrow
but I do like yesterday

it's so pretty
invented by feelings

The night is brown
The palm trees
The kiss
like a dog

the lavish receiving

I take the moon's thumb
onto my lip

I believe in ecstasy

dumb

the way a worm
is only skin
no eye
and there's only one

sky

I know
a lot
a lot
I know we rot

but look
at this

perfection.

EVERYWHERE

HUSH ROBOT

I haven't met you but you look familiar
I've met your clone
There's the thing next to McDonalds
which is McDonalds
Tap water with a drop of coffee in it

Maybe people aren't looking
at what poetry is
just who produces it

Yeah
It's like collecting urine
I'm so ready for the past to be gone

I'm so ready

VACATION

We're peeing on

God's rosebush

but God pees too

If God doesn't pee

what good

is he

PERMANENT BREAKFAST

I mean
I'm still
there

anywhere

eating
an egg.

PUP

get on
your airplane
and look
down

look at the planet
earth

it's like anyone
on a blanket

anyone
you've ever
raped.

NO POEM

talking is

opening

numbered

doors

when

I just

wanna

lie here

naked.

THINK OF ME

Sam was pockmarked
and really funny
and I absolutely loved him

But I dated his best friend
a more beautiful guy
who was actually sort of

mentally ill.

I don't know why
I wouldn't let myself

have Sam

I guess I wanted to be alone
with my object

It was a very manly age for me
Sixteen

But I keep thinking
about Sam

I think about kissing his
scarred cheeks

I think about being sixteen
What I did
and didn't do.

Greedy

in that bedroom
and I'm still there

glowing

It makes me so angry
all these pictures
like ticks
on my groin.

I think
I am the things
I've done

And I am the things
I haven't
done.

WINDOW

The man on the airplane stinks
so I'll dream I'm living in a toilet

so much invention to get where a bird is
they simply have these powers

Reincarnation
what a weird wish

that they could be
former humans

watching humans
make mistakes.

All you see is ambition

armies of underlings
straddling one shape

You feel the crowd recede

all that desire
like fire

snarling

in the
little window

little people
calling out

their own names

little people
will be lifted.

I look like shit
but the man says hey
anyway

ugly is another kind of prey

like I might let you do anything
to me

like I'm worn

a boot
in the cart of my life.

I was eating a little sandwich
and he said
you like that sandwich

and suddenly it was full of cum

I mean that was the plan
to see what I'd do

when he appeared
like an insect

on my collar.

I just wanted to be sunk
that was the point of being homely

to let me off the ladder on his nose.

what good is pouring your cum
in a boot

it makes me not want
to go out

the window is wide
and the streets are full
of you. Any old man

putting his dick in my food.

That is the trippy wallpaper
the color of the ocean

even being an adult
even being ugly today

I'm always
a girl

almost
a whore.

LET'S

give mice

little machine guns

HAT

i guess people are gonna
treat me like a prostitute
until i have money
cause i am a whore
i mean i'm not
but your hand
is touching
a whore.
here's a room
full of ten
dollars and look
at the clock.
time is a cunt
cuntier all the time
so take mine.

SAVE YOUR LOVE

let's admit
we made a mistake.
what is success
if you're standing
on a dunghill
of cowardice.
i'm tired of reasoning
with a monster
someone who is different
day by day.
whatever happened
yesterday is so over
dissolved
fucking done
a monster is
a creature of the present.
this is why i am afraid to sleep
at night. everything
is being erased when

a monster sleeps.
i am afraid of the morning because
it is only sky
the same dessert
we are strangers
or you are
strange to me
someone eating
in the shade.
i'm ashamed
of how easy it is
to know me
i'm so familiar
naked all the time
my same legs
my ass
i am such a weird little girl
for wanting to live in your
light
picketing in the heat
like an ant

i wanted to save your love
so i was talking to the tables
the chairs
the gold doorknob
i was asking them
what should I do?
since they knew
i was also saying
goodbye
i would never see them again
goodbye
and their sameness touched me
songs like fifty white pills
kicking in
and i slept
alone with my mind
to the tune of
red hamburger meat
and crows
and the end of the world.

VERONICA BENCH

look at me I'm a clown
when I'm forced to breath
I become a different clown

look into the bowels of my face

am I like you
or are you like me?

is there a difference?

yeah. there's a difference.

alone and stalking the empty fridge
it's like having nothing
twice
just the salad
getting smellier

it's like you're kissing me
but from a strange country
dark eyed

peach

a bum doesn't work
a tramp just travels

13th street never surrendered
its junkiness
it just looks like shit
relaxes me

brown night
the ions
their pure bouncing joy

I wish I had a big horse blanket to put over us
wouldn't that be nice

THE LIVING MODEL

I've always wondered what Ron Padgett's apartment looks like

It's on 13th street and I picture it long and narrow

I think of him as someone who likes Italy

I think his apartment is clean

I think he drinks red wine but

just a little in the light of chosen lamps

I admire truly clean people

because they are doing it all the time

They make a small mess and it looks beautiful

because the room is empty

I'm a little bit in love with them

because I never learned to be clean

My grove is shaggy

with evidence

a sewer of garbage

for every choice

I am a pig and that is my radiance

You can see how passionate I am

Clean people are sometimes passionate too

I'm always surprised by this
That they could be citizens but burning
I think when I like someone's poem
it's spiritual
like exchanging fluids
I'm not so much greedy as unlocked
spit gets in
and lives there
To see your thinking
was dirty
even if your apartment
is clean
A poem cannot be clean
it lolls in itself
beckoning

BOOTH

There was a commotion
somewhere in my jeans

I was a teenager again
getting off on your enthusiasm

You rolled on top of me
big sex plank

and my genitals stirred in my underwear
like a dog turning
toward a noise.

I said WE ARE SO NOT DEAD.

WE ARE SO NOT DEAD I said.

And I walked around with a top
and no bottom

which disturbed you,

like I was an ad for genitals
a dancing cigarette.

My apartment is just glass
and leather
like the phone booths of my childhood

I loved the dark seat
and tucking one leg under

I was so young

raising the big black shoe
to my mouth.

YOUR BOOK

it has heart
but it's heartless too

it's like you

YEAH

What do you do when you wanna fuck a bad artist?

I think you do it once.

RAT

Here I am again

a blonde monkey
in an oxford shirt

making a list
of all the things I'll do

for money.

It keeps changing.
I stand at the window

a new queen
but the same really.

I'll never do that again.

I know what I hate and
my personality has assembled
around this agony.

Which hole can I give?

Which hole will be a room this year?

I don't know. I don't know
what hole I have to spare.

Really I'm a rodent
which means my holes
are my home.

It's not the way I look.
It's this greasy self coming forward.

And I FEEL for rats

I feel their blood beating
in the dark park.

I get a particular chill
when you scream rat
or when you say
I killed the biggest rat.

I kind of wish you would just disappear.

I don't want you to bleed or anything.
I mean
I don't fantasize about making people bleed.

But I want you as a memory
and I guess that's violent.

HERE

Neither of us likes to waste.

The thing is we're horrified
by how the other doesn't waste.

It just seems poor & disgusting.

Little old cheese in little plastic bags.
Little bit of milk.

Each of us eating
spoiled food

trinkets on the shelves

horrible flower
1972
that mustard color.

There's so much
catholic clutter

feelings
behind the paintings

without sex we are just these collectors
homeless

eyeing each other

CHARMS

I want to have my ovaries removed
and wear them like earrings.

Those are really weird earrings.

They're ovaries!

EVERYONE LIKE HER

I just had a little of your chocolate
and now I'm wild with desire

for more chocolate

it goes right to the discomfort
sweetens it I think.

The moon's on
a short white leash
and what happens
to everyone
happens to you.

You're gonna die too.

I'll make you a tape
to play
when you say my name
slowly

like I'm stupid
like dogs are stupid
like the homeless are stupid

you're always calling
everyone stupid.

And you are kind of
a lunk

big medium
mind.

I've been tuning you out
since I was a sperm

That's why I can't listen well

all your talk
you made it vulgar
to speak

talking in your sleep
when the fear cartoons play

talk when you wake up

talk
talk

hate is real
it's an actual thing

and I really do
I hate you.

INVITATION

may cause diarrhea
and slowness of thought
and the belief that you are living
in the medieval period
in a long gown
and a tiny crown
in a field
full of singing devils

GUILT & PASSION

The thing about unconventionally hot people
is that everyone thinks it's their own private taste.

But it's not. Everyone thinks they're hot.

They just aren't talking about it.
They're quietly digging the person.

ELF

You're like a milkmaid

who transitioned

There are these

little buds

left

MEANWHILE THE DEVIL

is stirring gravy
is manning the door
is checking her phone
is raking the leaves
is petting the dog
is licking the lip
is closing the door
is having the idea
is mocking the slut
is putting on the sock
is dreaming the dream
is hating the person
is eating the food
is locking the door
is driving the car
is kissing the mouth
is wanting the thing
is talking alone
is smiling in the mirror
is him over there
is the clock breathing evenly
is the dark math of a planet
is a hotel room
is a cold silver necklace
is the air tonight
is the color green on my computer
is your drug addiction
is the ocean
is the tree growling
is the world talking about us
is the prick of a star

someone

is the tits
is the night
is the mouth calling

is the bugle call
is all the organizing
is the soft face
is the raped horse
is the grinning tradition
is the strange heat
is the prison sentence
is this room
is that night
is the pile of diamonds
is the shouting commercial
is the romance you chose
is the ugly tattoo
is the ugly comment
is the ugly wagon of memory
is the drum beating
is the wheel of fortune
is your pretty body
is the woozy minutes
is the photo
is the fish
is the girl
is the money
is the van
is the light
is the eyes

midnight

is never
whenever
is you or

whoever.

ICONS

frighten someone
you're peeling twenty years off them

you're shooting right to
the monkey
the child

the great lie of abuse

that you were never hurt enough
not unless you were dead

decked till you
saw

fizzing white

stars

the world gets
as small as the

hand

the world gets
as small

as one song
with eyes

and a hand

one statue head
in the fern

of your day
of your day

who said
spitting flowers

i could kill you
i could kill you

if i wanted to

THE CABINET

Don't tell anyone.

About what?

My weeping heart.

FIRE

it's so vain to stop loving someone cuz they don't love you

it's also not true

you still love them

you do

FOUNTAIN

You are not alone.
There are a lot of people

quietly interviewing
themselves.

You seize timelessness
and then you pay for it.

Every gas station
is green
have you noticed

money and grass
of which we have
neither.

Red we see first
but green we feel

the lie goes in
through the skin.

The only way
to imagine
being human

is to imagine
being interviewed
as one.

Giving a very smart reply.

But here
look at the sky

look how red it is

No sunset makes its way
into print.

It's dissolving
look
we're watching time

and I'm a little older
tonight.

The sun is amazing.
The moon is amazing.

And it's amazing to think
of what it would be like
to delight people

with who you actually are:

saint and
criminal.

I am just like you
a hot wreck

setting my religion
to music.

I can feel something
visiting

your gold tooth
in the dark.

Being depressed
it's a shadow
a season

You don't have to talk
this way

Protecting your legacy
it's fetishy

Like living
at the museum
of your body.

Eating your own corpse.

I don't want
to curate my death
or yours.
So please

say
something
dumb

It's important, you know
for geniuses
to be sloppy

It makes other people brave.

Come
here.
Share the chair.

I think I'm someone.
You are too.

I've always wanted to know you.

NOW

god is

nothing

special

and that's why

it's all of us

the only meaning

is ours

which is this

temporary music

ROUGE ELEVATOR

you go to press the button

that says 2nd floor

and it's a nipple

and you don't go anywhere

it just gets bigger

MY MOUTH UNIVERSITY

Something old
Something passionately torn up

Some megalomaniac
who got people
to repeat his thoughts for years
until someone said

this is crazy.

Something someone was wearing
Something they said

TIN EAR

which privileges the human
like we're better

than metal.

Something else
Something like a word

backlit
on a hill.

What people invoke as a chorus is so repulsive

I mean
you can't speak for the world

religion turns into a spear

Anyone can be grand
but one man is
moving through the halls
with a coloring book

and wanting me to fill it in.

I don't want peach
I want MAROON
Put this feeling

here.

What is it that feels
good about a manual
in the mouth?

It's always the same
neon word

touch tongues
with this
brain

over here.

I have my dignity
my notebook

something old
some shred
of someone

letters jammed under the door

something in the mist
someone I liked
and then didn't

when they spoke.

I have my mouth
gated with candy

it's open

all the holes we have

it's open to you

I wish
it wasn't

open

MFA ~~PROGRAM~~

a person

destroyed

by improvement

IS DEAD

you're perfect
like an apple
slice
is

like a cat
is still
a cat

and satan
is still
satan

today

you're perfect

the ice
creaks

the cake
is pink

you're perfect

the sun is round
and draws
me in

the glare is nice
you're perfect

the flower is
bent
with milk
round its neck

you're perfect

like wax is
when

wax is

like anything can be

you're perfect
your body

is ugly
it's perfect

when you stand
over there

you're perfect

not nice
not at all
but the shape is

perfectly mean

the leaves shake
the man
is dead.

perfect.

THE MOON

SOMEONE

was hot

but unfortunately

a poet.

CAL

we were a little

more

than friends

but not much

more

UH

I've been praying a lot

sometimes all you have is God
and the color of the room

fat drips off my thoughts

falls into a pit

a field of wheat suddenly
is really scary.

It wasn't so bad
but I thought about how bad it could be

If I had a bath somebody watched me
even if I cleaned my teeth people watched me

and when I prayed
I didn't ask for things
I just wanted to share my ideas
I kept saying
you know what's interesting

and it was dark

the stars
they were sighing milk

they said tell me

I said it's
interesting to think
of parts of the earth
that are almost gone
having a conversation
about us

poems have to be so good I said
cause there's no music
like how could I come close
to a guitar

the stars said you won't
don't try

I said what is the ugliest thing you have ever seen?

they said no one has ever asked that

I said tell me

they said the ugliest thing
is when you hide your pleasure

I said oh
I was nodding
I felt so connected to the universe
and it made me want a cigarette

do I do that I asked

they said sometimes
they said sometimes when you smile
you hide your teeth
they said it's silly
it's so pathetic
it's pathetic they said again
don't do that they said
don't hide your pleasure

we see it

then I felt naked like a fetus
half-formed in a photo
that is handed to a woman who decides
then if she can be a mother

and her family
has an opinion
and someone says
the fetus is forming opinions
and she is drunk on a vision
of the future
that is
her own body in a room.

am I mother? I asked

they said no
they said we always say no
when someone asks that
if you really want it they said
you should want it so bad that
you would disappoint us
to get it.

I nodded. it made me sad.
I couldn't imagine wanting anything
that much.

I just wanna be loved I said. entirely.

they were like oh so
you're the baby.

I said at least I'm honest.
it felt like a lie.
what doesn't?

they said have you ever loved everything
about an apple
before destroying it
with your stomach?

I said no.

well they said like I should see their point and I was embarrassed

because there's so much I don't
see.

Why do I want it? I asked. God. inside me. like a meal.

they whispered then
like girls who never ate. didn't need to.

and I was a girl.

I was.

I ate.

DON'T FUCK ME WITH YOUR GRIEVING
TONGUE

is such a good title

it ruins everything

under it

TWILIGHT

my armpits smell

and well

I'm a little fish

walking home

in shoes

RECORDING

I don't know who keeps
all these cake shops
alive.

I guess the rich though
I always think of them as dieting.

I guess they don't move all day
and then they move a lot at the gym.

Just moving for moving's sake
like they're their own pet.

And then they get a treat.

Cake or clear liquor
in a clear glass.

Helen Keller lives here too
and that alarms me.

She's gazing out of a billboard
for some conservative foundation
and it seems strange
how gussied up she is

but OH RIGHT
she was rich.
That's why we know about her.

If she had been poor
she would've just been
tied to a chair
in an institution

how moving

STARS

Why eat

Why put makeup on

Why even wash

your pussy

when you could

be listening

to a pop song

I LIKE

someone beautiful
in a bad shirt

I just want them
to take it off.

THE HOLE

I'm a freak
in a nightgown
and outside
a cool garden
drips.

All this wasted time
could be full
of something

but I'm always on the rug.

I've had good ideas
and placed them decorously
around the room,

all the little fish
still wriggling
on their hooks.

I've had more good ideas
and kept them in the liquid
of my mind
until they all
started to

rot.

I've made a snack
and called a dead friend.

I don't like everything I do.

I've let all the ghosts
feel me up
and it reminds me
of being on the subway

the things people will do
if you give them the green light

and then you do.
Well I do.

And then they touch me
and I pretend not to notice.

That is my joy.

It's underwater
all the time.

But it has not been a total waste
the silence.

I think it's more of a steak
than a hole.

And anyway
IT'S NOT SILENCE

since now there's no room
in the world

unmarked
by human noise.

I've thought hard about this.

I've dug a dirt hole in my
bedroom and lived there

rubbing my clit with a penny.

Under my blanket
there's an old sandwich

and a jewel.

POCKET MIRROR

look
what you've become

this
scintillating
pervert

HEY

I wanna throw you down

and kiss you

then roll onto my back

and be kissed

while saying something quiet

and intelligent.

FOUR FUNKY PILLOWS

Maybe it's ok to be a jerk

if you're having

the time

of your life.

MY BABY

I heard about a woman
who was naked
with her naked baby.

They were naked together
and she didn't care
when her mother passed
through the room
in judgment.

She didn't care because
she was just so happy
to be with her baby
and to be naked.

I didn't think I would want a baby
but I started to.
After hearing about the woman
her gentle madness.

So I opened my vagina
really wide and
a little horse came out.

When my husband came home
I was lying naked on the bed
with the little sticky horse.

I had a guilty smile on my face.

My husband was alarmed.
We had kind of made a pact
not to have babies.

Famously I said
the only thing

coming out of me
in this life
would be shit.

But the little horse was
hairless and raw like an organ
and I was in love.

I had never been in love.

I said this is the only baby I could love
one that is not like me.

And my husband began to stroke the horse
who was nursing me brutally.

Smoke rose
over my baby
and I was glittering
in the drug state

to be god
in the small grove

my husband knew
I was not the same

wife.

If I was holding both my husband and the horse
over the edge of a building
and had to drop one

I would not drop the horse.

I was thinking this and my husband must've
heard me thinking
the way his face changed.

Every day I was this new person
Every day I decided not to kill the horse

Every day was
the same
the same

and different too
microscopically

each hair grew

Each hair had a penny shine
and the day was fat
with a love

like gravy.

Every day the sun poured over the horse
and he stirred
chewing the blanket

Every day was the same
and different
the sun
the horse
the body was a church I was singing

I was so happy
ecstatic

I was naked in the gray building
the well
of pennies and echoes

dark bugs lived there
I didn't care

I didn't know I could be like this.
I didn't know I could love a stranger.

One who is not like me.
But I do.

It could only be now.

Today.

You.

OTHER PEOPLE

I used to think that everyone
needed God

but
today
it was early
I changed my mind

I thought—no
I *think*

that some people
are lamps

others lambs.

A lamp goes on and off
but a lamb
is always

on.

A lamb prays to God
warm
in the sun of itself.

A lamb likes The Cure
conversation
your shoes today
A lamb will stop and stare

doesn't
care

You're so beautiful, a lamb will say.

No I'm not.

Yes.
You are.
Look at your fucking shoulders.
Your face.

A lamb will kiss you
say I've always
wanted you
like this.

Like what?

I don't know. The way you are. Just exactly like this.

A lamb is so into you
the story

of your life.

A lamb is like tell me again about being 35 and sad
I wish I knew you
then.

No you don't.

Yeah I do. I'd kiss you. I'd say I like you like this.

Like *what?*

Just exactly like this.

A lamb could die
right now
A lamb is that naked

I mean the eyes of a lamb
every lamb
are bare

as an ass
as an ass.

I know
a bad line
when I see one.

When I write a bad line
I know.

Maybe that is God

Knowing all you can
Know

I know I do bad things
sometimes

I know I feel
everything

I know you don't need God
but I do

I know you don't talk to chairs
and the sun
I know you
are alone

I am too

I pray
I pray

it's so
perverted

looking
at a tree.

Shit
I'm weirder
I'm so much weirder
than I'll ever

know

write a poem
kick a rock

No
Not everyone is a lamb

But I am.

OR

When I mop
I think so much
grime and pastness
is leaving us.

Everyone can read minds
it doesn't mean they want to.

I love the things
I should despise

but don't.

I love when you do
what you shouldn't do

to the internet.

You think I'm easy
I'm not

This is just for you.

You think I talk on the phone
all day

no

just to you.

You act like I walk around
rubbing my pussy
on lampposts
and stuff

You know
the word WHORE

contains the word OR

like she's deciding

which god
is good
or *is* god

good.

I love how you're like paradise
but not really

I love how I keep being
here

it's dreadful
incred-
ible.

I love the way your t-shirt smells

I wanna take it
to the Hamptons
just me

and it.

but I can't cause that is crazy
but I will cause I am crazy

just wide open.

like when I drink goat milk
I feel it

or when I buy a weird shoe
that takes me out
for a walk

when the moon isn't weird
but I am

when the night
is fast

and I know
what you want

to be asked

when I just lie there
I feel it

warming
the door

whore.

DARKNESS

The light goes out

and it's black

I mean night

is also brown

and muddied pink

where the window glows.

Quiet that is hooded

but also naked

like a woman who turns smiling

in the black time before

a dream.

It is all the darkness

of the world

that makes me feel

like a liver or a pancreas.

Something warm

nudging

in the tank.

No stars just cuts

in the sky
a red light blinking by
I was six when I thought
about being buried
alive.
I wouldn't sleep.
The coffin nailed shut
over & over
like a song
and the man's face
when they opened the box
how his expression of terror
stayed
almost like
it had been baked on.
Powder mask
minus the oceans
of his eyes.
They were like
a china doll

's eyes. Blank
plus pain.
And that chilled me.
That someone can make
another blank.
That blankness is
not empty.
That it can hold
a lot of things
All the torture
I can grow
in my mind.
To die in a box
under the slamming earth.
To die while you're still alive
screaming like an opened dog.
We're such animals
and you hear it
when we scream.
Big buckets of

shadows and a halogen

sun twitching.

Death by another man

's hands.

In the darkness I think

of all the animals

at the bottom

of the sea.

No fish ever

took more

than they needed.

Now dead in the

great tank

because capitalism

is a dead star.

The machine

falls through space

clicking

I hear it

in every clock

how we measure

the void.

Even the future

isn't

a virgin.

And then

I keep

going

It is really

so fucked.

A mouth

blank

& loaded.

god says you're all open

to the dark gray night

degraded xerox

you're all cunt

No water

No noise

only evil &

where it hides

or shows its

ass.

The machine part

lasts.

JOHN TRAVOLTA

was so beautiful.

He must think that all the time.

I was so beautiful.

ICE CREAM

is baby food

you get whacked

with a large

cold

tit

and see stars

THE COIN

The whole world seemed aroused
waiting for this man to bring me presents

He was a better god
Santa was
drunk + erotic
coming in the night

I saw him in every coin
goaty face of a president of a man

There was a man
in my neighborhood
a fat man
with a white beard
& mom said that's him
SANTA
& I stared like a candle.

I believed everything she said
until I was very old
Too old to be drinking
from a can of milk
on the floor

She wasn't a good liar
but I loved her
I couldn't help it

I let her light in

She was real
and holy too
and money was real
the monkey face
on a dime

BLACK DICE

In the tub I look down at my body and think
I'm either overfed or underfed.
Then a ghost bows his head.

How vulgar to know
your affections
as staggered meals
to want to eat at night in the tub.

It's so perverted
all the time I've spent alone.

There is a blue ghost and a yellow ghost
flashing by like cloaked birds
They make a lot of noise
They draw my eyes to the spot
where there is nothing—just sound.

I walk dripping around the apartment
dark hair in a dark house.
My eyes are throbbing
a lurid film waves by. Bye.

WART

I am late mostly
because I can't find my sneakers
and because I am masturbating
and because I want to hear
Isn't it a Pity
one more
time

and I want the song
out the door
and into the street

excitement

it's all a person
can have.

Stop playing the victim
someone said
to my face

I said I thought you knew
that I know
that I
am a bastard.
I thought you knew
when you met me

bastard.

Anyway since when
is there one prick to a pair
one angel combing her hair

aren't we all creeps
creeping around
sniffing the air

no
no

I just saw an angel
there she goes
in her nice car

that's interesting
that someone can
be nice and have
a nice

car

that someone can
draw a line
and stare at it.

I mean a man
with eyes full of
swaying flowers
and I could love him

he'd eat my evil
like sushi and cake.

my evil.
sushi.
cake.

The future always comes
and you'll be someone

Young in my underwear
you said

24
not 29

and your hand felt so good
the perfect temperature

it didn't matter what you said
it didn't matter
your erection
was warm

sun on a chair

I put my cheek there I didn't care

you thought I was an animal

I didn't care

I was listening to that song
the love
it was mine
you didn't have to give it back to me

it was enough almost
giving a shit
giving it

up
You can have me
if you want me
I said

I wasn't joking
I'm never

joking

You'll get that sometime
You'll be like oh

so everything
is scripture.

Yeah. It is.

And when you see
that I love someone new

baby you'll see
I am just like you

I'm a bastard too.

AND SATISFACTION

That was an airplane coming
to land on my finger

I'll hold a match to my whole life
encounter your starvation

mine

for that animal there
fat and beautiful

Can I change? Can you?

I don't know

Everyone's trauma is so interesting
all these different shapes of heartbreak

You manage your defects
by touching them

then
an awakening

it seems so obvious
to be glad

the air is singing

usually there's sex
airplanes
a marching band

then you return and you're older
pacing creature

I don't know

when people drink beer
in movies
I miss it

I wanna be the pig that
for whatever reason
isn't murdered.
Maybe someone wants to fuck the pig.
Maybe the door is open.

I want your strong skeleton
the look on your mouth

and satisfaction
and satisfaction.

RULING CLASS POETRY

he's a dick basically
he covers it with cheap philosophy

a rhyme so pleasing
reassured not bored

it's futurity

the possibility of there being
a future

I say why not

that was like some old drunk on a stool saying that

but I hope that you listen

I'm so hungry
half a face

touch me

I'm right here

FRIENDS

no he just collects people
to show his kingdom to.

THE TROUBLE

with a career

is talking about it.

FRANCES

I was this dirty little penny when you met me
but I've been rubbing up against you
and now I'm shiny and you're dirty.

THE OVERGLOAT

I'm better than him
and I've been writing
for 10 minutes.

GOOD FOR POETRY

The sky I guess is good for poetry

Giving stuff away is good for poetry

The shoes you picked are good for poetry

It's like I know you so well

you

but that isn't true

Feelings are good for poetry

Meaning is good for poetry

People will say NO and maybe

you will say NO

Maybe the night changes

Don't be so afraid

of disease.

Loving people is good for poetry

being porous

So put your hate in the toilet and stare

Your weird ugly body is good for poetry

Seduction is good

Having a wish that grows in the dark is good for poetry

favorite songs

limitation is good for poetry

the waning apocalypse is good for poetry

the sex we're having is good for poetry

being broke

ripples and what they do

age you

praying is good for poetry

and god is lucky for poetry

our little poems beating in the night

curiosity is good

buying groceries is good

your life right now is good for poetry

this now

twisted and melancholy

dull

sexy

you think you know where the light is

so go live there then

GO CRAZY

sometimes you talk about the truth like it died
and you drew a picture
so what is this pulsing grove
the blood in your hand
you think you have to make a home for your mind
but you can't and isn't that nice?
isn't poetry nice?
windows are good for poetry
doors
being dumb is good for poetry
not playing dumb but when you're really dumb
it's good for poetry
your innocence and letting it leak
talking is good for poetry
that some people will never kiss your mouth
is good for poetry.
heartbreak is good
your small grove is good
the shaggy aisles of memory
you'll die too and that's good for poetry

you aren't dead yet
look at your hand how it holds the banister
you're not dead
look at how you keep changing your mind
about what's really important
it's really good
it's so good
the things you say
the way you feel worthless
but bound for finer things
pretty coin on your back
it's so good
wasting your life
but with music
all afternoon

THE TRUTH

You're like a bowl of roses
and clear water

Little bits of pork
floating in the water

Is a pig
sticking its head
in the ground
rooting around
and finding truth?

I think yes.

Pig doesn't drink
or find company
and life is a shiny hell

Zoom in
on the skin.
Plant a stick in the dirt.
You wish it would stop.

You
champion of the breeze

Truth is here
very still

Go on
touch the devil's heart
that is subtle
human

that is your own.

ANYONE

who never wastes time

is a waste

of mine.

TONIGHT

I think you should
experiment
with vanity

don't finish bad food
to be polite

read minds
cause anyone

can.

learn
from children
and monsters

learn
from the mirror

you're a
monster.

stare
into the dark
crack
between
2
buildings

and
don't
jump

see
that you are fragile

be easy

because nothing

is.

be nice
to common
angels.

be nice
to geniuses
who are nice.

just lean
into the light
of their
hair

lean your whole body
into the light
of freaks

into your own freaky light.

keep saying the thing
in your head
watch your words

understand that they are wolves
in the night

you are a wolf
tonight.

watch the snow

remember how easy it is
to kill people

you are a wolf
you can kill people

so don't.

think about what you live
for

pancakes
rock n' roll

I mean
if you live
another day
you can have
breakfast

again

put your face
to the stereo

it's a seashell
that
pink.

watch everything
like a scholar

watch your lover sleep
like a scholar

beat narcissism
with a kiss

beat narcissism

just
shut the fuck up
sometimes.

pee a heart
in the snow

write on the air
write what you

know.

you think you want your life
to be easy

you don't.

take this
your youth

the beefiest apple

don't pretend not to care
everyone knows

when you care.

don't pretend
the sunset
doesn't
suck your

dick.

don't you know
the night
is open
for a wolf

like you

look how the
moonlight pools
in the black
of your eye

look how hot you are

saying nothing

saying hi.

just be your own
baby

tonight

be like an egg.

I'm sorry.
I'm really sorry
all that bad stuff
happened to you.

I'm sorry you
looked at
yourself
and saw

a toilet.

I'm sorry America

is a toilet.

let's take it all
like money
in the street

poetry
and the internet

tap water in a glass

your youth

the youth
of your whole life.

you think
you want everything

you think everything
is something

to have.

you think
the night
can hurt you

it might.

you think
so much

at night.

I love when we just
sit around

minutes
their caviar shape

maybe this is gross
but I love that you think
you're stupid.

you're not stupid.

the ocean is as beautiful
as they say
and chocolate
as sweet

you had to laugh
at the ocean
first

you had to hate it
the thing
that you

love.

just go. I'll go
with you.

become obsessed with minutes
they live
to die

like you.

become obsessed with
this

youth
that
opens

like a can

become obsessed
with minutes
they are a guy
like you.

they live to die like you.

CREATURE

Lindsay Lohan
did Marilyn Monroe
for Playboy
and I think the word classic was used.

I said no.
I said creature.

Hugh Hefner didn't like her beauty

which I think of
as bratty and ripe.

I read something about her
penisy labia
in a magazine

and I pictured it.

I saw
a thin white
sausage
in my room.

Her udders
and the big
cat's smile
between her
legs.

Marilyn
is maybe

a DEATH MASK.

I say maybe
it's just how I talk

though all the time
I'm certain of things.

I see the creature
crawling toward me

I see the love
in my own mouth

like milk.

I can't stop looking at her.
I think this is what it is

to be a bisexual
and an addict.

You just get the shit kicked out of you.

You get to bask
in the old milk
of Marilyn Monroe.

White sun washes white
over the room.

A car passes.

Is it white light or black light that fills the set of our eyes when we die?

I think it is instead red
but really it's brown.

It is the color of all our pumping guts in darkness.
Every color breathing in the room of your head.

So much makes me think of death
some baroque picnic

garlands of meat
Lindsay's feet

her toes those
fat white grapes
pouring off
my computer.

Still
these aren't seductive pictures.
I mean I'm obsessed with them

but they *aren't* seductive.

She doesn't have a secret
or anything.

She has a working class glimmer
which is actually
the opposite
of glimmer.

It is an object that no longer shines.

Sooty window of
a factory
and the beautiful
door

is open.

What happens when you work your whole life?

You are lamby
blue collar

grit.

You just become
a candle.

That's it.

FLOWER

It's weird to be a flower made of meat.

A really red carnation. People smile.

They like the idea of someone crouched over the barrel of my youth.

They like when I eat a chicken leg.

They chuckle at the occasion of meat eating meat.

At home the ghosts aren't as frank but the way they look at me,

I know they are thinking that's MEAT.

The hungriest ghost I know lives in the drain.

He is skinny but fat around the middle

a quietly seeking gaze in wet darkness.

I look deeply down to him and whisper

I'm hungry too. Nothing. That's the thing.

It's the song of a bit of food walking around

with an appetite.

The universe is a creep

don't you THINK!!!!

A cool white planet in the distance.

I have been told that I should drink

or fall in love to write poetry
and I have peed on the street.
This is nothing like a drug portal to poetry.
My druggy self was fat and mute.
The camera was rolling but all that footage lived underground.
It is the voice in my head
the oldest voice.
She calls me up and I sit patiently
with a grey flame in my eye.
And angry I guess. I ghost.
Like I have a little shit in my mouth.
There's a tendency toward scorn
in my family that I have to temper in myself.
I have to soften the trigger
which is lurid as my mother.
Even at the stoplight as I'm gazing.

I HAVE TO KEEP WRITING. LOOK AT THAT ANGRY
PIECE OF MEAT. A MAN POINTS. YOUR MOUTH IS LIKE
A MOVIE THEATER HE ADDS. I'M WALKING DOWN THE
STREET. CHICKEN LEG IN A PINAFORE. THE WORLD
CREAKS. SOMEONE'S REACHING IN MY MOUTH, A
TOTAL STRANGER. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL
DIE AND THAT'S THE JOKE. THAT'S WHAT SUICIDE IS,
SOMEONE IS SHOUTING THE PUNCH LINE FIRST. Only

there's no shout, just a hole, other people talking. One day I'll wake up and the universe will know. Men will know. God will. The world will creak and my brain will empty its colors into the air.

It will be morning. Is there a perfect time to die?

It won't be the perfect time. I'll die.

Leopoldine Core is the author of the chapbook *Young Friend* (Perfect Lovers Press). She lives in New York City.

Selections from this book have appeared in *Apology Magazine*, *PEN America Journal*, *Bone Bouquet*, *Everyday Genius*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Big Lucks*, *The Drunken Boat*, *Imperial Matters*, *iO*, *Rattapallax*, *Agriculture Reader*, *Death Hums*, and *No, Dear*.