

Dreaming West

By **Hannah Berling**

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pop tab

eyes open to the glitter
uneven in the sky
 shimmyshake
dance floor writhing
across the black backdrop
lightened up into the indigo dust

head hinged back
brown bag crinkle
to doll face lips
pink on your pop tab

you laughed
wet mouth wide
highway stretched
six states bedroom lights
miniature strings of interstellar
chemistry

jagged teeth

you kept my lipstick in your pocket while you
sat at the bar—bottled beer to your mouth
broken teeth
and now whats left is
melted wax puddled in the cap
tinny remnants of your blood
on your tongue
greasy pigment on your fingertips

bruised elbows and bathroom stalls
gravel stuffed mouths
leftovers from the parking lot
where my 89 chevy waits
for you to crawl back forgetting
your teeth with the neighbors
all smeared with color

response from you no.1

*i taste
your pill tacked
into the crevices
of your teeth
stuffed deep to the roots
bitter hormones in your spit
left in my mouth*

*i watch your fluorescent skin
move in the street lights peeking
through the blinds
your cheeks stained
with ink wash bruises
from the remnants of your black makeup*

*i sprint breathless
from those streams
flooded and moving fast
mossy rocks stabbing and slick
the tiny pink pill decomposes
in the aluminum blister pack
tuesday 10:07pm and your body
mimics the curves of your face*

white room with ants

snow chunked mountains
like ants behind glass
file with leaves
and crumbs to greet the queen

i watched your eyes trace the lines
of ice dripping down the tree branches
and electric lines

black and a far spin
seatbelt slice

remember those stories
blue moon incidents
from the sky
accidental lobotomy

you turned to me
lips chapped skin peeling
paused like air
breath back

missing

the longest train of lectured breaths
pass and pass

i am trapped behind the red and white barrier

and i think
maybe you're lost somewhere
in the train cars of cargo-stacked
stretched between the weight
of this and that locomotive
1 and 2
swept away
like citronella flames
shake for air

but your bed brings me
closer

to you
to god
to trains

stop and go- -you aren't here
like paint spots that swelter
beneath my eyelids when i press
too hard

the train shakes
the leaves of poison ivy you
warned me about

reverse

road rash greased with blood
well oiled tack and slick

fibers of wool stuck
in the yellowing rip of skin

tattered around the patchwork
unlike bloodline run from the inner
corner of your snake eyes
into that blonde hair clustered pink

filled with linens
you left our laundry basket suite

laced with you and i
now stained with the burns

you went searching for
along the dotted black top

scorched back to boredom

mice chatter: from you two

*you growl in your sleep
misplace the noise
into the bed sheets
seeping past and out the open
window panes
filter the smoked air
from dip-dying your expensive
blankets your favorite hue
of gray*

*your throaty grumble
leaves the room and summons
an engine roar and siren echo
float over the road
while you roll over and rub
your eyes back into the flutter
you found yourself in after
exhaustion of early morning
runs with antlers and mice*

how the body decomposes

hand shake and quarter turn
away from your two bit rubber boots
we are salt crusted and dehydrated
from the constants of the sea

landmines crush the silence
of last weeks phone call
you quit with an exhale
and i sputtered up blood

the in between organs
scraped out
visceral flesh split
grisel and thick oil
tinted red and wounded

cornflowers

i stood in the kitchen looking at you
and you were staring at me
missing your eyes out in the water
floating next to the orange buoys
like an eel
taking a dip into the cold

one more step and i will spray
your brains all over the linoleum
the girl on the tv yelled
stretching into the words being passed
between you and I

I popped my hips off the counter
rooting my feet to earth

i could feel my cheeks heating
as you opened your mouth
to send an earthquake in my direction
shaking the cornflowers blued up
in my brain
clouded by
blood on your palm

disoriented

fever sweats and denim jackets
tucked away in budweiser bottles
crossed legs platform heels
ankle flip rollerball swivel
my joints forgot about the thick fluid
pressing against my kneecaps and hips
making it hard to walk

i stood and wobbled
cranberry shivered
onto the floor adding
another alcohol stain
on the painted concrete

three steps
and i stumble into you

razor burn: from you three

*the gray of your skin
splotched kaleidoscope
reminders of last nights
forgotten scrapes created
by the gravel kick up
spun and stuck in the air
only finding solace on your shins
and cheekbones*

*you stood flat
like petrified wood
in front of me
waiting for me to offer
my shirt as if i was surrendering
to the nicks
sprayed into
your face*

white noise

my shoulders cannot hold the break
of the hurricane
and the radio waves of you heart
boiling in your chest

turn your dial to 96.2 and sway
to the lamb skin thump into the stethoscope
my stomach creeps over my sternum
and weaves through my rib cage as i drive
down 25 wheels too fast
the rusted out muffler rumble

deeper than your tongue
reaches down your throat
and netter's anatomy pages
diagram of a split clavicle
and smeared lipstick

like ripped skin
tissue splayed and tattered
thick red coffee silk gushes smooth
gapping down to the
pure blue bone

nickel

stacked rings leave
a green stain
rounding the bottom
of my pointer finger
visible infection
tainted by the cigarette

your hand

rubbed off the infection
eating through the cells
that once glowed
in the letter you sent me

it rained for fifteen days

skies moving quicker
than the overflowing
sink forgotten tap
addition to the tile floor
red on the ceramic
diluted into a swirled pink
drip drop from my nose

you ran from the river flow
too high and spilling
onto the asphalt reach
across forming a straight
stream like strides down
the drugstore aisles
search party
scour for what you
left behind

from you four

*you in the passenger seat
chin on the plastic sill
hunch and stare
at the swallowing breath
claw at the car
engine rattle through the valley
oil drips onto asphalt
multiply the debris
dotting the lane*

*the guard rail will not
save your yolked face
from the glass shards
but i would throw my palm
between
if i could hear your song
play pause repeat
and fall back into the ghost*

pretend poison ivy

rash spreads open
red splotches like tiny
buds sprout from my shoulder
flesh clumped together
under my fingernails

vines race to my elbow
connect freckles
with merlot stained skin

spots scream out of pale paper
like berries spiked in green foliage

you smacked my arm
and your hand took on the red

forgetting august

my yellowed sundress
wrinkled soft with sweat
skin cold and pink hot flashes
stuck on plastic interior
dashboard of your car

sherbet ice cream
melting in the sky
like my skin deteriorates
into milk as the days
grow cold months
from this drive

you turned to me
heat collects
on your lip
and i remember
the powdered dust
we walked in
traces of painted
footprints

drinks: response from you five

*christmas lights
zig zag
the patio
glaze your face with
a golden haze*

*your lips were blushed
with the lipstick i hated
left on my mouth*

*you looked at me as you blew
out smoke and your blonde hair
lit up like your black nails
i forgot to care about*

what i imagine the west is like

dust rag sky wrung out
into the breathing dark of the mountain
and you misplaced the fireflies
under the gauze of my dress
pale legs like a cheap hotel lamp

bedside and your eyes squint
to keep from my tiny peep show

circle circle—dip
your eyes follow the door
out with the deer antlers
and river bank algae between
my ribs like causeways and ferryboats
as if water and blue lips spoke
like the pink of your sunburn