

LOVE LETTER 11

Esvie Coemish

Because I Finally Fell Asleep Kicking

Sometimes the water I hang myself in
is another planet, cloud-ruin, operatic machines
lit on fire and the leaf she held to my face lit on fire,
the trees bent over me like parents, and I'm a prince
of grass — when I stretch my legs they go on forever.
In dreams my mother is covered in snakes, her face to me,
how I pick them off her one by one
until her eyes fill with tar. I still hear the whirring
that spins from my heart, my love for you
doubled over inside me like a folding chair.
You are my blue ax handle, my lips open
as a groundhog's nightmare, my skin hung like a French fry
as I pull it from the window. How it goes mad after that,
looking across flatland until it turns to a woman
waiting with shark's teeth, the elf eyes I drew in notebooks.
I think I see how I ran through the dark and climbed into bed with her,
the doll's face smiling then frowning, how I threw it
away from me, my eyes squeezed tight as coffins.
If I could sleep, go back to the frog the neighbor boy
tattooed with bike tires, the ringing song of angels
crying their ugliness — they don't even know
what world they're in, that my eyes have changed color.
The pond we used to walk by is scared of nothing. I throw my face
at the orange fog between head phones, lash my tongue,
bark at the sick or the doll whose neck I tied to a jump rope.
Her face after it hit the pavement
was a flat plastic scar. Above the garden
where my mother planted peas I ate raw, those damn angels
with faces that are not faces spray from the garden hose.

LOVE LETTER 16

Esvie Coemish

Your Name Is Written on the Palm of a Hulking God

Belted one, bearded one — are we inconsolable?
Mornings we sweep up worlds broken apart as we slept,
and snuggle our strange skins close, o inhumanly close,
thinking of farmland, the future a cow's face
held in your hands. There is nothing unless you will press
your cheek, your lips — whether I want to or not
I'll subsist on your breath's passage and wake
with its hot ring on my chest. In the bitter entrails
of nightmares, God's shaved crotch of stars;
in silence, grandiloquent ice roots slipped to a husk
on the floor. There are moments when mercy spikes
through the front of your throat and breaks
in your mouth like a truffle. Slaughtered
and broken-limbed, the world seems a rough cyst.
The violent doves will squawk from their stone arm
thrones. Kingdoms don't waste, but they squeeze
from outer edges toward the center; degree by degree
their firmed muscle incepts new contours. Mourn that blue flame
by the airplane's auricular hunger, frothy cloud scars
white in brooding. I will look for you, Love, like a trophy
reflecting the bruise of your face. Wise men, how bored
they must get with the heart's tantrums that wake
to my retractable pen's nervous *cli-click*
as to a sparrow's miraculous sea-birth. The praise-hymns
buried in blood-brown temples damn the ceiling lights.
Nothing is familiar, not the radio songs or the sky
lounging black on the windshield, not my voice that thinks.
The drops on the window will cling to your back
that has flipped toward me. Red light. Green light.
The neighbors retire into shadows, barbecue smoke
rinses the air. For a second I've stopped imagining
your red robe left in the void. What I think, you hear. Majesty,
meet the baboon rump of the sun, the imbecile day.

LOVE LETTER 17

Esvie Coemish

A Toast to Thy Hegemony of Dust

I want to be an ant with you,
and when the colony turns on us
we'll devour it — the Queen's head
a symphony of smashed lightbulbs.
But I'm just a doofus with a spike
in my back. Stained glass
shoulder blades, scarlet fields
we can see ourselves in. The gypsy blood
that sails up to my head holds festival
for the catatonic Midwest, misunderstood
as a goner, as a dead-eyed Hungarian pianist
cooking destiny into my temples,
the roundabout where bulldozers circle.
Ah, when you announced my name
I slid on my new socks into the fireplace
and rocketed from the chimney into gardens
where armored archons turn men to ash,
but not us, we're ash already. The cave dweller,
the self-savior who's gotten away with it all
and has no one to talk to tastes us in his teeth.
Onto your spine, I etch all the magic words
I know: *amen* and *hallelujah*, *armpit*,
fire, *tentacle*. And also, I am seized.
And also, I have lost the Mesopotamian dirt
of my ovaries, the rivers no longer sing
hushabye worlds. Your back must be the gravestone
on which I fell asleep and woke touching myself.

LOVE LETTER 35

Esvie Coemish

Deep in the Thrumming Egg-Fields

I dreamt of you and woke a bloody mouth,
a missing rib, a boneless octolimb.
So I called your name, or tried to. My rubbery growl
jolts our phantom child,

and in his almond he smears his ferrety eyes,
unaware of our sure deaths, the sea
that trickles like a faucet in the horizon.
I've been left the bee,

stole its coal-spun head and made a charm
to paralyze, to sting us in our sleep.
Honey, Honey, sweet from the raftered barn.
Lick my swollen arm

that opens like a nightgown letting loose
our Eden — jagged pinkwhite scars.

LOVE LETTER 45

Esvie Coemish

Mitosis, There Are No Mysteries Too Big

When I open my mouth to cry I give you
all my colors, and from Abel's first blood puddle,
you paint fire in the trees. Canticle lips
kneel me in the water. I see now
I will become a soul whose face emerges
over tractor parts rubbled in the field,
which smells like sweet alfalfa — everything.
I am inside a painting that is the world
to laugh against or too small to worship now.
On the other side, voices are breaking in song
and sand — soft for gods to lay their cheeks.
It's winter, the moon slips like a sponge
as our limbs entwine, grind to interstellar dust,
and lake mud gorging on my toes I love
radiates from your bones as sun-warmed grass,
flute music sloshing in my throat,
me a dragon, I don't know how soon —
was it summer, the cicadas out?
I have whispered spells over your hair.