

OTHER PEOPLE'S EMERGENCIES

Jessica Bozek

HORIZON
(chartreuse)

AZIMUTH
(moss)

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Jessica Bozek lives, teaches, and tinkers in Massachusetts. She is the author of The Bodyfeel Lexicon (Switchback Books) and the forthcoming Dear Darkest Sky: Postcards (dancing girl press). Her contribution to last year's Dusie Kollektiv was a collaboration with Eli Queen entitled cor · re · spond · ence.

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AFTER A DISORIENTATION

In three spice jars pasted shut & buried in your pillowcase, you keep: the nail half of your mother's right thumb, the sharp of her left clavicle, & four embryonic pinky toes (Edwina, Pinkish, Salting, & Carlo). They blacken beyond recognition. After dark you ease your way in with a headlamp – past the pillow's lumpy center – & whisper *lullaby* to your fragment-siblings, *goodnight* to your fragment-mother.

AFTER A DISORIENTATION

You pestle your jars & plant grounds on the roof. Trellis an air, wound well up the headboard. Ghost the nursery remains, soldering matchboxes to bassinet skirts. You skirt concern.

AFTER A DISORIENTATION

You visit the sweater-graves tightlipping your tomes of relative-grief. Lower your laugh with sandpaper, mole the cat's toy mouse with fish eggs. You pass tense, grow to frame.

AFTER A DISORIENTATION

You revive, protect your bones by piling afghans on the porcelain floor of your bathtub, stay warm under an accumulation of others. You push them over the tub's edge when a new toll arrives. The blankets float, until milk penetrates their strands. They sink, milk-weave returned to milk-sea. Yet there's never not time between tolls to knit yourself a new stack: you pull up yarn in myriad colors, textures, from the drain-holes. You arrange your hair. When you sleep, you tuck the knitting needles between your ribs. Only the flash of cicatrix-across-rheumy-sky rouses you. Milk-sun unhinges milk-moon; the self-punishing round.

THE PRETEND-DIMENSION
DISTRACTS YOU FROM YOUR
FAILING POKER FACE

you constrict walls windowless & bruised a
room to fit the hollow reducing your father's
body into softened ground this dark darken
box might have been an old washing room
with the wood reflections of an almost
forgotten fact of the building but here in
the ribcage floor, ceiling, furniture there is
only one room a single door what is outside
opens the cold body out onto a corroded
balcony is cold & what is inside has become
so too you wish that the room did not smell
of the men draining blood in three musty
chairs that the men play cards around a low
table had entered with slide-rules instead its
surface of hipflasks a trompe l'oeil you
wish that someone at the worn boots of the
quietest would apply a compress to your
damp hound your rising head squints into
the airshaft-glow

GHOST-LATCH

You collect catastrophe, a cauterized horizon:
sight lines overlap to aid your flight. Sirens
perforate the still. The body's last-known
address a cliché of untroubled blue-green sea,
near the mast of a fixed shipwreck, now buoy,
now limit. With love, the dead bruise. You
save a stray cat. *Goodache to the doves*, he used to
say. *Send your troubles away on a bird's wings*. Your
dreams are set in revised cities.

THESE WERE HUMAN SQUEALS

You wear sweaters. Your appearance does not
suffer; you simply refuse to wear a coat over
your shirt & increasingly plain ties. For five
years, regardless of seasons, you wear the same
thin lambswool sweaters – in toffee &
cornflower blue. The blue for your dead
wife's eyes. There are two toffee-colored,
named Scarlet & Julian, sized medium & large.
You wear them together, though there are
days when you carry only Scarlet to the park
& nights when you carry only Julian to a
ballgame.

One day you buy a new sweater – spruce. This
must be a good sign. You haven't betrayed
them by getting the toffee & blue
professionally sealed, like wedding dresses, at
the cleaners. You are granting them their
freedom finally – a space where they can close
their eyes. Boxes marked *The Beautiful*.

MIGRANT & WINTER

You throw the windows out, adjacent heads
in a Swiss asylum. When they want you to
swallow. Face-flesh heavy, you talk about the
balusters, how nails might puncture an
impulsive throat. The nurses hold on to street
clothes & sneakers.

With gauze-wrapped bread & crystalline
attention, you set out for the town tracks.
Anyone would know you from the slippers.
Across the road some people never stop
talking, even as they walk away.

Yes, you might stay. No, you might say.

THESE WERE HUMAN SQUEALS (cont'd)

Twice, you try to kill yourself in the spruce.
Other days, you go without a sweater. It's
July. This must be a good sign. The third time
you wear the spruce, you close the front door
of your apartment softly. From the roof you
study the city. From so high, there is little
sound. Emergency vehicles swirl their
emergency lights on the way to other people's
emergencies. Then the spruce breeze bloats.
You overtake it on the swift fall. Before you
assail the sidewalk, missing a small boy on his
bicycle, patient dog looking on & down & on.

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