

disperse

sarah ruth rosenthal

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conventional life

the right eye disapproving

spin an answer

can't stack all the little stacks

up and down your

rush hour traffic class

pain could thwack me

as I move through

bulging black leather wallets

a revolutionary posting

messages

I want to read

smoking at the lower pond

I made a friend

we sat on a bench

useless as pennies

'give me an assignment to

complete my hurt' she whispers

'just want to extricate myself'

packing a knife can't be hers it's

'from this sob unending'

butcher's upper torso

'I'm so done' she's calm I

look again she's chopped her

tail off slurring

'still's really me'

look again chop

one of our own posts

inside papers about

the lethargic TV watching program

crisscross tape

on cement walls

friend stands guard

are the grey people

sitting on a bench

packing harm

in their hands

yellow pools of streetlamp light

snow in the streets

smoggy frosting

butcher knife

she chops herself off

cockeyed with pain

crawls to sit against a far wall

to keep away intruders

stay invisible

the buddhists stand before her

hand her a blank card

she reads

"concepts hurt

childhood was like x because y

how you clutch your narrative

blood gushing down

have your self give us a call"

cars zooming past

in both directions

she's pale forearm

hands buttocks

at my feet

night's fat

middle daughter

disperses

out of eyeshot

no fear but suicide

the final protest act

gleaming tip of another knife

question several

invisible team members

why do you want me to

serve white cake

this sunny morning

please paper the walls

with crazed notations

carry on a bit in the silence

gloss this house

Minneapolis bridge collapse the fellow who played the

come to

question tell me about your childhood she turns into a young

the end

pastry or rice flour squares just so and the bins are stuffed and

of form

sweet faced

hands on my

neck where's

the first page of

my sheaf I'm

too late for that she responds

suiting herself up

makes a small

cut six or eight

toxins issue

well that's how she works we both have sprawling documents

licking my

my raw material

roll up papery gown

nail this procedure

sidelong seduction

gives way to neck

incision squeeze

bitter pellets

from watery pink

tissue filling many

messy pages

hold me close

doctor with your

carefully practiced

vibe

gathered at neck and

short sleeves

child where I started

en route to

woman land a destination

in a silvery nightie

it's special because

I

jump into the water body

a secret moment to wipe

the grains from haired skin

salt I can see

laughing

on a boat at night drunk

beginning to teeter

she falls back

saying I fell back within myself

till a friend stepped forward

pulled off a silly hat

I'd forgotten I had on my head

someone says draw me

tall and slender dyed straw

hair apricot freckles

competing with

china doll features compose

a woman

letting her guard down

pay attention she

hasn't realized I've been

tracing the lines of the foot

right here in my cross legged spot

hungry fingers

I'm god's quired herald

bell tower and I'm the bell

go

pitch your tents

on damp lonely ridges

at the edge of survivability

it's late

start

the long trek out

Sarah Rosenthal is the editor of *A Community Writing Itself: Conversations with Vanguard Writers of the Bay Area* (Dalkey, 2010) and the author of *Manhattan* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2009) and *Lizard* (Chax, forthcoming). Her chapbooks include *Estelle Meaning Star* (above/ground, 2014), *The Animal* (Dusie, 2011), *How I Wrote This Story* (Margin to Margin, 2001), *sitings* (a+bend, 2000), and *not-chicago* (Melodeon, 1998). She lives in San Francisco and serves on the poetry jury for the California Book Awards.

Special thanks to Jennifer Firestone, Dana Teen Lomax, and Erin Wilson for their feedback on these poems, and to Lawrence Arrowsmith for his creativity and technological wizardry in the making of this chapbook.

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