



JACKIE CLARK

SYMPATHETIC
nervous system

for ra, when we fell in love.

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health concerns often noted routine the lack of any further creation
the uptight laundry mat taking as little taking as much writing about the story of our life without
a dog or with a dog with something of a greater demand how the demand lifts
the grey stress the dull atmosphere evangelical or autonomous the stairwell for passage
we all have a small box we manufacture ourselves in some are more fluorescent like a song
you hear & don't immediately like only to find later it is all you want that you sit at your desk & write

now we are sitting here again proper & full of positive words the story has seemed to make itself into another story
someone somewhere reads I will never have the privilege to be on the outside of it just a flawed
inner correspondence with human hair & finger nails a groomed monograph of skin to be something
the easiest trope yet irresistible the story through someone else's mouth sounds pleasing rarely am I asked
to expound upon my own we all cultivate an image we eventually wait
in doctors' offices in hospital rooms the not necessarily near future is still a certain one the fist
that is in my throat the palm lines on my hand impressed by the astonishing accuracy of astrology
how very "like" me but of the things to give up I have a few dependable fluctuations yourself inserted
in the waiting room the room overlooking Broadway in the morning time will move so slow
in front of what is empty to stay seated a harrowing postcard a search for instruction that hubris believes
lies at some inner depth to write about something real this society is run by vultures the train is the subjunctive
of the light up above filters down strategically or by accident we keep talking & talking & talking
eventually having learned time to speak clearly to pause in between words the chasm between bodily
mentality the perceived audience infinitesimal the overhead feels rehearsed the doctor's office
where I recently departed broken or clipped awaiting confirmation procedure procedure consequence
always an arbitrary resting the appointment & the announcing it is my aunt's birthday today & I will
call soon to say hello the poems I've been reading correspond to the season when weather is all
we can see worn down a twin heart in reading then writing then writing this
twin alabaster of the 2 train barreling downtown & with me on it everyone I love
accounted for the summon of love this is our responsibility to keep stepping onto the train & riding
for a while resting our heads on each other's shoulders then stepping off when it feels right

morning of obvious maxims calculating representation a plan for when the current plan retires
heavy-handedness for all avoidance techniques a little bit every day seems to get to the heart
matters cohabitation support sometimes spot on sleeping face to face side to side
I love when one gestures for the other's hand such simple physicality an about-face recoils communication
attempts left free to float away with the wind we keep living so I guess we need to keep
thinking about dinner steal days to read quietly on the couch thinking about bodies inevitably leads to thinking
about the way they connect a seraph of detachment everyone seems like they are friends on the internet
nothing is better having more to give is just a fact
not a judgment what more should we be aside from posted intimacies another form of expression
to build a small shelter to cover our respective shoulders the laughter we provide in the face of darklings
if I wrote every day I wouldn't know more about how I felt but would remember the day more precisely

exhaustion trope the willingness to will the smallest bird in the palm of my hands cold extremities colossal
fight against the seasons a powerless mastodon bones caught in amber to forever be
gazed upon no real execution administrative dalliance conventions for breeding appropriate protocol it must be
maintained by some subject an individual or automaton writing the act of being here
& now impulse makes the heart grow fonder each story one step away the glass ledge bringing
home a story of purpose slipping introspective all this time filled or empty it is time
just the same farewell fanfare looking ever more polite & controlled observation of artifact
this party & that party or the fact you were there pursuing all these lovely homeopaths a friend
cave to call my own the nets that coalesce above us the nets that coalesce below always
in some inner stable of stratosphere where over-crusted alabaster reinforces the cracks sweet
action a pathway to equilibrium nothing is delicate so much as severe taking up time that feels
in constant peril this body waits for results waits for time to be less so the mannequin front
runner promoted to director my friend cave had other commitments my friend concave
brought me to this moment the quiet click of the heating vents a little mouse lives
inside my walls if I didn't know any better it is hard to outlast all the diving fare-thee-wells

mirroring one of the first acts we learn in the early morning modeled behavior
that mirror that has followed us that mirror we've fallen in love with & their child mirror
there are reasons for everything yet most things remain inexplicable country
house we make up ways to spend time canopy of spider to walk under to walk
through to feel the light fall through we walk along the water shadow natural
occurrence against rock against water the allure of a silhouette so hard to resist poetics
the light the dark the sum of these words longing changes the front side of the mountain morning
quiet the backside torrents & blistering trees soundscape like cars moving along a highway
the wind through the pine needles reaching our ears at some point you just want to be better in relation
extrapolating patience make-believe desires for the purpose of purpose even here I am writing my song secret

when I think about what it is to have a voice I suddenly have no idea what mine sounds like just like smoking
to pass the time the need for additional stimulation if honest one could mention the irreplaceable
the idea help the idea held the piano galloped & lines of negotiation are drawn at times feeling
comes to us dreams are premonitions other times they haunt it is expensive to petit four alone
the want for more indicated through small actions we must learn
to want to be alive we must learn to take action as if we couldn't do otherwise

even if you don't want this time is here for your trouble & how much trouble how hard
it can be to carry what you need on your back the vague impersonal "you" a lame stand-in
for the I the loquacious of all experience you want to be surrounded by friends
I want the same I want to tell you stories about childhood I want
to understand more through the telling it is not illumination but something more profound a piano
sonata in my two ears a temperate commitment to the song hierarchy of wings
my heart so much all the difficulty we masquerade around
what is better than crossing bridges with flush cheeks with familiar conversation
the arrival is always quicker because of it because of the daring commitment to continue I must
trust you to see I must trust the warm pocket you wear on your face

today is another day water falls from the sky the couch & the cat & the current descriptions for
descriptions sake pulse for providence pulse for poisoned words that burrow in
the circulatory that mistake coincidence as a sign a guide a misspoken guard
words that are interchangeable a mountain knows such leisure storyboard of all known facts
it has been so long it hasn't been long at all tattoo upon the body this story for my intimacy
a reminder isn't enough what is permanent terrifies even the permanent dispels
over time when you should learn you don't learn & it dies just the same
it all dies just the same redefine new ways to talk about the middle
the different silhouettes its facial expressions are unreadable nothing spills out anymore
neither bucket nor faucet or ocean the outside is on the inside the inside has been taken
to the crypt the stairs are dark the room is dark
outline the desired shape with your finger make the outline with the air

errors clerical or otherwise my head already filled with elevation filled
with the parameter of the outside world without a known starting point none of this has truly
begun not in a controlled colloquium or rather it begins & begins & begins a new allowance superseding
the old to hang balance in silence what is the purpose of that to ask questions to a page a page
that I expect myself to fill a backwards philosophy I can only write what I have felt inside the sticker-bushes
& rock gardens walk with me my love nothing happens because of it

to write with strings so close the ties sweeping & busying themselves inside the small apartment I hear
every move if we go out we go out with a purpose making plans basic gestures toward
activity a resilient barricade center all these competing intimacies alone at home
in the temporal realm everything unexisiting pulse relations in the fire drawer go ahead
& pull it open let what's inside engulf your face & surround the army you populate
your outlines with let your decisions all be wrong & questionable like prayer before
the monument there was a mountain & before the mountain there was dirt & each surface
was beheld with wonder I miss the formative decorations the love the revolution turning on a previous axis

sympathetic & hypertonic the right raised slightly more disequilibrium a borrowed phrase
but existing just the same to put off writing with more writing letting the sleep pull you under
circulation distress living in such a state the day a six-footed monster
under the sun imagine the interplanetary potential for shore-worn glass to unhinge
invite the cross-eyed mind to step forward into the light I only know borrowed vocabulary
allowed to jump from one island to another un hunted & undelivered tell a truth & tell it wrong
expanding siphon in my chest what swells expects to be filled how easy to want
to bloom to watch it open & succeed in its beginning a subsection of succeeding
a day of bright but cold skies when it is quiet it is hard to know when it's still it's easy to remain

the body is polluted exhausted but posturing like a wheel turning underneath the body
is harmed is flexible touchable is usable until the very end the sole
c-curve the tilted hips resting in chairs all day a project in moving
a recognizable fashion more than a want for a single window just a breeze unconscious
to the train a day daze the tripod for livable hours the picture the big one I am lost

colossally anthropomorphic fragments stolen ingenuity steals the bank vault succeeds premeditating
the archive of past flowers writing to describe writing to define to sort the tools & store the tools
a museum retrospective a search for unifying themes pragmatism is lethal
lining up all the pins making a place dig down into the ground & scour the artifacts
hang them at different points on the body communicate your logic rhythm to the field
you will be misunderstood & worse you will feel misrepresented
to tell the joke because you know it not because it gives you pleasure at this height nothing feels
arbitrary eager for better reporting skills a charge or permission to go forth
reticent needs to accompany your pride to be serious about the future it's been so long
since your last reflexive raven you looking at the books that surround you what have you been looking for

the lowering coast build a sea wall in between your heart & the television auxiliary forces
prepare dinner-sized news I can't look I feel bad about not looking when I close my eyes
what do I see tough expectation "you" messages &"I" messages
driven for the driver's sake everything is almost exactly the same since you left accumulation
of all the days things have gone missing without being noticed red blue silver yellow
please take a color take it & put it under your face let the color melt inside your body
traveling between systems let it bust & waylay the convections use the colors
to inflate balloons to hang on your door this is a plea from the body to shower the river
with something radiant & proud something deserving of triangulation I don't talk to anyone
in poems anymore because what I want to say most is too practical

under the sun structure unforce fabled wind tour the badlands with others ordinary ruin
televisions left to despair over time the bike transits outwardly approachable needing solitude
for an act that would rather not be alone driving head first into the promise strong cheshire smile
friends fading a glimpse in passing glimpse the rocky terrain

second jurisdiction how to fill time someone to sit across from the table abbreviating discourse
everything just goes quiet after a while walking for news or plans or some way to augment
the current situation what are we supposed to do sensory deprivation reading can't cure
or doesn't cure doesn't distract the mind enough a day like any other the living brushfire
skirting up the alley the dumpster hired to clean up what needs to be cleaned up feels like it would be impossible
but as I sit here I know that it is not to start some barometer waterfall a force field peppered
with plutonium a mind influenced by words it has seen elsewhere to write something of the heart
a discourse at a sustained length everything feels remote I would say foolish you can reread letters
go in search for someone so far so long ago but the physical discourse doesn't vary to not be
ungrateful still ambitious sweeping speeches to sweeping rooms the serious intricacies
of cotton-puffed capillaries the parameter guarded by collage cutouts replications defending against pattern
the meta interior a room in a room a building in a building a nonspace in a nonspace
fold into the stairwell fold into the echo it creates

three dimensional blue sky the memory photo behind my eyes the skyscraper angling
dramatically with the seasons everything is new the open door the first time the sounds
of Saturday morning the plants growing inside their pots another reflection behind my eyes
our silhouettes in the water blue & green with just the right amount of sun
we construct its meaning after the fact the same afternoon we lay on the barren grass
our faces pointed in the direction of the sun our competing creations have no place here
here our hands can touch & we don't have to say anything excavated pressure
if we were going to live our lives differently this is how I would want it to be

razor edge deliberations carry over voices carry over visibility the emperor marches
forward makes crosses with its arms a battle of uphill a battle evermore
in the day time the long list of classifieds & somewhat promised-filled acrobats even arid conditions
persist allows for long walks long standards long unfilled the elevation full
of circumspect lung power capacity dehydrated dehydrated dotting blood dotting the nose
masquerading the denomination the trees filled with lamps yet to be switched on
women who connect when women topics are broached the belly with baby the mom in another state
how alike or unlike your smooth skin the secret to keeping the body presentable the secret
to surviving in this house in this head that dusts the lens to ask
for favors without being in any position to demand no leg up no asset of return

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Jackie Clark is the author of *Aphoria* (Brooklyn Arts Press) and the chapbooks *Red Fortress* (H_NGM_N), *Office Work* (Greying Ghost Press), and *I Live Here Now* (Lame House Press). She is the series editor of Poets off Poetry and Song of the Week for *Coldfront Magazine*, and can be found online at nohelpforthat.com.


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we keep talking & talking & talking
eventually having learned time to speak clearly
to pause in between words the chasm between