

From *Ripe*
by Jim Walker

You had a rabbit nailed above the bed.
I should have seen that as a sign to leave.

You watch your reflection
in a bowl of boiling water.

You still love him
because his knees don't bend.

Let the little girl close the curtains.

There are pieces of me
you'll never see,
pieces of me owned by others
you can never meet.

You are a ruined stone,
a box knife drunk at the wedding.

My bones are so dramatic with no skin.
You took it all.

My dark fetish is twisted limbs.

You don't mind ropes.
You don't mind hearing me scream
when walls turn to shadows.

I notice the contortionist's crotch.
I can't help myself, bending like that.

In the darkness behind you,
I am a cartoon.

I sleep at your feet as I should.
Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

You told me once you enjoyed almost drowning.
The cold comfort of debris bouncing off your back:
books, bones, men.

There's something simple and lovely
about frothing at the mouth.

I see the snake swallow its white twin
slowly, slowly, until only the tail.

The squid spills ink in your gown's clouds,
cotton and sins and see everything
– I mean everything – for sixty bucks.

My eyelashes leave welts across your white hips.

You dream of meat hammers.

I look over the garden
and feel your slap ahead of me.

I see you walled in. You tear down the wall sweetly.
Done. My room becomes more rooms.

You hold up the wall of water with your left hand.
Everything turns: broken bodies, broken hearts.
I work happily to pull you from here.
But the rope is thin
and you are dead weight.

I have no face,
only dents like potatoes have
– suggesting a face.

I saw the moths pinned to corkboards,
named by children.
I saw their bodies
drained and dry,
their wings spread.

The small and large intestine.

Mouth of the Venus Flytrap.

A rough-shod wooden club.

A piglet's esophagus given as a gift.

Blue veins running from the heart.

A pair of black-frame eyeglasses.

A rotting peach.

A body of birds moving tree to tree in the dark.

A caterpillar pupa bleeding out.

A skull with fine teeth calling me "good boy."

I play the music of ropes raw around wrists.

I play the music of decay and tired buildings.

I hold my hands over the flame,
curl my mustache with red wax.

I use wine bottles to kill the giant locusts.
I have nothing else
but the joy of sending shatters into their shells,
their teeth, their smiles, their sick songs.

A king crab's legs
pulling her in and away from my illusion.

She only looks at the fingers missing from my left hand.

My penis falls off in my hand.
It has become a bronze skeleton key.
I don't care.
I can't see. I can't see green.
She opens my belly and finds air.

My head is a cactus.
The bed I sleep in
is another cactus turning to stone.

My genitals are exposed.
The white stamen
wilting in her grip.

Pretend, if you will,
that I'm still beautiful with my eyes closed,
that I don't look dead
when I'm asleep.

You like how I taste like leather.
I see brown
and dream of trailing my tongue
over your dark wings.

Kissing at the picnic.
His skin: silver scales
like tiny mirrors reflecting her breath.

It's easy to bend and pray
with a bag of cement on your back.