



The
Third
Event:
Part
Three

*Jackqueline
Frost*

for Romy Opperman

“...they go down to Rotten Lake
hoping for wonders.”

— Muriel Rukeyser

what I was shown, over
and over, in atlantic light,
was that the un-mutated body meant
while other things did not.
since it « cannot be otherwise, »
they suggested that I try, if at all possible,
to not be paralyzed by sumptuousness—
my own or any other's

uncooperative, I asked
if there's a way for even
the petroleum body to be
wretched *and* luxurious,
like a ruin, but free.
for its meaning to be lost,
not in the night of time,
but in the infinity of
tender and brutal mutations?

« rude enterprise » they condescended,
as one would to mega fauna without power.

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the jellyfish narrative —
this is what I saw in a dream.
miles of them dead in ribbons of purple
and electricities of purple.
my father, the bad boatman,
looked out onto the gulf,
his blood knowing things.
we spoke together in my dream
of his big catches. of sharks. later in my dream I am
on a beach with my father, dressed like the Dead Sea.
we are burying jellyfish with plastic shovels.
he says to me,

« how could it always be like this? » I say, « it will not always, if the dream is to end. soon
I will no longer be the sea bird kidnapped by thermals, obsessed. » he said, « yes, but
Pauouelle, the dream's over, it's ended, we're already awake. »

so I covered my feet in jellyfish
—to prove something—
and ran screaming into my father's house,
screaming, « we're already awake, »
as my father poured white vinegar on me.

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you are meant not to pick up
where the archeologist left off
but to fill the ditch
she left with her wonder.

as if home, I called into someone else's house :
« mama, here comes midnight
with the dead moon in its jaw. »

the future, someone once said,
is a body of water unlike any we have seen
or heard. the future,
wet as if arriving from a voyage,
drying its shiny clothes by fossil fire.

off-white interrogation of fate
lost in a cycle of summary currents,
meant to return the dislocated element
to a sea with which it grafts familiarity.

the police secte, the oligarchs, the bureau
the thieves, the « struggle » for « progress, »
the shambles and briars.

on my ride through vague country
to the great fake mock peril,
I hum, « o the sun
is a cold and
a pale horizon. »

land of marine transgression and of want.
they have given strange birth to us
who turn against them in their blood—
our daddies in the long ground.

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though I had first imagined our meeting as more than the effect of a dubious solidarity, the archeologist began by asking if I believed in a deep form of life and if eternal things endured it. she asked if the third event was solid, liquid or gas. who are the SAPs?, she asked. when or where was the deep-water horizon? what happened in the abolished century? what is the boundary of the good? what do atlanteans give up for lent? I told her arrogant humility.

she did not ask how, despite knowing one or two things about the interpretation of the actuality of land, I find myself the subject of a moralistic fantasy and the owner of several dysfunctional images. she was not interested in the game of complex betrayals by which I make myself sick with viciousness, by which I make viciousness sick with fragility and by which I make fragility sick with caprice.

she was not interested in understanding by what techniques we enhanced a deception.
she asked me if I thought « atlantean culture » was dead. I said it didn't matter.

things I told the archeologist: that I done never seen any cold white water, ever.
or winter fruit, ever. that there was a language, yes, why not. one can suppose
that there was once a language. get yourself headhunted out there looking
as they used to say, « the teeth of the shepardess is slick with them dialects »
but it's all mud up the dock where dead dialects, all-souled, sleep, dark as lillies is.

I told her, « I am all quandary and spite and dereliction. both very alive and very dead. I am
used to opening the creases of the thing and spitting on its heart. can anything restore to this
body its plundered sensuality inside the continental fold? if my mistakes are indestructible,
is there an alchemy by which they may become beautiful? if my cruelty is a fire,
might it warm those whose cruelty is a sculpture in ice? »

at a loss, she asked me the meaning of several atlantean proverbs. I responded that I do not
believe in the unreconstructed translatability of sedimented social accidents.

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the heartland is a track,
an incorporation into the spectacle of strife,
emanating as hemispherically disproportionate dead light.

the fathers are all sent out to look for the oil in the water
while the mothers glean about, picking up pieces of time,
shiny and lugubrious, offering them up to
the overwrought kingdom of fucking relentless cane
where the essential is incessantly menaced by the insignificance of
an absolutely un-imperative night.

when one speaks here of love, it is more the filth we float among
in serious imitation of knife collections swept out by the flood, in imitation
of so-called boat burial traditions and so-called lapsarian treachery.

is what looks like twilight meager fever? do even the unremarkable survive?

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the jellyfish fill the waters. cling to everything. vibrating in blooms as large as architectures.
my brothers and sisters were fishers then, before the oceans deoxygenated until only the jellies
could spawn their polyps and proliferate. they too died in masses on beached heaps, mile
thick ribbons of purples and electricities of purple. soon everything frightening in this world
was likened to them. nations subjected to the violence of other nations were described in their
terminology, metaphored in jellies.

they made colonies, infiltrated estuaries, mitigating the marshes of all ambiguous creatures
who went onto the land in fear and dried out in fear, so their eggs hatched in fear, fainted and
dried out, to seep into the land that now feared until the coastal places of this world were at
once swallowed by the waters and so in fear went gladly from themselves and crept inland as
souls of lands. so, the high places were inhabited by the ghosts of low places and all smelt of
gills. in the hills it was heard in low frequencies the pale songs of crocodiles and bullfrogs did
fall from the sky into deserts and laid eggs in cactus sugar and the eyes of rabbits.

you can imagine us as these souls of lowlands.

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surely it's all the dark that makes us look so thirsty,
even with four moons barbarously illuminating the atlantic night –
all us baddies scheming locomotion and stealing light,
who try with all our might to not let our childhoods escape.
I want to catch my childhood over and over again like a sickness.
especially that memory of when we put
all the bottles of hooch in the bed
to protect the bad boatman from himself,
who otherwise would drink until he was no longer speaking,
as his wife would throw the garbage all across the floor, as he
would dream of all the different ways to die.
he had invented so many different ways to die,
by fishing sharks at night and
gigging manta rays without a light –
each one a little more than he would dare to try

in the neck-battered-heavy-blooded woods
where he made women tremble like wicker furniture
and where people have nothing good to eat
except fantasies of naked power.

but isn't the first degree of feeling is so cavalier in all this splendor! over-disposed
as we are to plenitude and apprehension, over-saturated with acts of sincerity, and by the
eventuality of love! under-disposed as we are to eating raw potatoes in a trailer by the sugar
mill, to air burnt with sulfur, where once there was a small revolt, and, yes, they tossed all the
rebels dead into the marshes, to be eaten by the jellyfish. under-disposed as we are to dead
rebels in the marshes, and to man-eating jellyfish,

I told the archeologist that I would've
liked to be able to represent my culture
—dead or alive—without any suffering,
but if I'm insolent and wonderless
it's cause I'm fucking sick-n-tired
of the imperative to ruthlessness
that I endure to court your ruthlessness.
and if I choose this ruthlessness
it's in order to prevail against you,
you, the specialists on whose lips
I live as something I can barely recognize
and to hope that in each act
of meanness against you
that what prevails begins now—
in rattlesnakes and watersnakes
and gardensnakes and graveyards
and water graves.

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dreaming, I am on a beach with my father dressed like the Dead Sea.
he reminds me solemnly that we come from a long line
of vicious, fragile and capricious birds of prey,
which is why I love to eat rotted blood
and why I love to be used as a weapon in ceremonies
in which those who govern us imitate so-called natural violence.

in an unexpected moment of pity, I told the archeologist
how in being cut off from her own people, she finds that she must inhabit a world whose
constituents, being alien, force the mind to succumb to an imaginary populace.

even if some SAPs believe it, I said,
the third event is not a book.
it's a drowning

o, may the outer-atlantic
and mediterranean worlds
look upon me and pity me in my fury,
in my wild over-confidence.

but let us now praise famous men.

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