

## RUNOFF

*JEREMY PATAKY*

It's morning in your lower west  
where you retreated and seasoned in.  
And summer heat is a snowslope  
where you dug out a hibernation cave,  
you landscaped the arid valley  
with the rivers passing through,  
you drove treelineward with the sunroof  
open to the first rain  
as birds pummeled the voices of DJs—

drops leap but not free of the stream,  
sound flung but leashed,  
and I shed layers  
as sun grazes close and  
ice is linoleum in the valley.

Water magnetized water  
and the town held you and your orbit  
became a ceremony of trying to go, waterborne,  
on out, anonymous, common.  
Leave the powerlines and wires,  
leave behind ditches aspiring onward

aspiring, break free.  
You were the only one going anywhere,  
the gravel pelted the underbelly  
of the vehicle, you squinted into brightness as  
you went out from there where you were.

## WE DISCOVERED A VARIETY OF ODD AND SMALL DEATHS

a mile out on the ice—  
mousedead, hawkdeath,  
crowdeath / smudge of color  
the sound of ice water  
enough to crack our looks.  
What lattice works to provide ambiance  
to the yard you remember?  
What melts curious precisions from ice?  
A single-prop drones far off like an interstate.  
I perceived the blister of your isolation  
swell with unnatural animal fluid.  
I watched you ascend your hallucination—  
you preferred minutes spent realizing.  
Can I rescind the pale glimmer of your shoulders  
from my catalogue of wants  
although you are in sight?  
You are the form the sky is against.  
Birds flit untangled  
in your apple hair.  
Water mirth spring-floods  
out your careless mouth, your arms bracketed  
small deaths, cubdeaths, avalanched, thawed.  
Snow burial repealed a summer set on decomposition,  
then autumn built itself  
on the bones of unraveling bodies.

## FASTING FROM SPEECH BECAUSE OF THE SEA

Down a flung coast,  
your voice, palm oil.

Chants wick around the house.  
I am pallid, your voice,

a distillate of the forecast,  
freeclimbs.

Your landing craft ferries out  
again and again

every time the same  
and I finger matches

diagram the wait

combine spices,  
season out the ring,

pile spines which carcass  
the unkempt lawn

of a year's seasons:  
a meal, your smell.

I broadcast my preoccupation,  
focus my penmanship,

decrypt your air post airport epistle,  
desiderata of sequences and series ravel.

You dismember  
into a fraught epic  
called spontaneity.

The mapped distance alchemizes  
into the sopped flesh of a collapsed moment

when the microscope

is cross-haired in the telescope.

You carve echoes in the threshold,  
self-replicate on the large island:

townsites for your buildings,  
ornamented suburb floodplains

a whitewashed steeple.  
Luminous basalt, its new glare

double knots of milled boards  
in the speckled craftsman ceiling.

Beach work inside your sleep.  
Polymer cotton, wind-wracked

airborne now, a geophysical handle.

A strand left to tangle  
in the beach cobbles.

A spider on your arm,  
pausing, pausing, walking on.

## YOUR LETTER IN THE MAIL DESPITE THE SEASON

You blueprint taste  
in a kitchen of solar light  
for mouths shaped like stone stacks.

Overfull, fire smoldering,  
you ache back or forward to your animal appetite.  
No glamour or drama in a content stomach.

Cairns scare migrating game  
into their kill-site—  
your kill-stroke is delicate and well-delivered.

You got saturated with the tired music  
of their changed garments,

a radiant custard of melancholy, or nostalgia,  
or doubt, the pleasure of swilling a mixed summer—

perhaps this one or the one before?—  
and winter is the smoke haze  
between your eyes and the view

and that part we spent under  
a canopy of blissish forest,  
under the above called overstory,  
why and how do you hide there now?

I sweat and walk for days and pour hot water,  
finally, over me. I sweat and walk for days  
to inundate each trace of you I have.