

Rat

As if the scream can be heard on a sunny morning. It's too loud to be audible. The scream voiced by last night's darkness. This morning, dispersing ah ah ah ah in the air, the white scream suddenly gathers. Do people know? How much the dark hurts from light switched on during the night. I can't turn on the light even when night comes. The day of the first snowfall, I was x-rayed. I asked anyone I met: Have you ever turned on a light inside your intestines? The flowing dark mass. Is this my essence? When the darkness is lit, I'm a beetle pinned down, biting the black string of a muzzle, shaking my head boong boong boong boong. Struck by light, I'm a reptile, in one breath, a beetle on its back. My dignity is the darkness. Has it been hiding inside? Lights on, in my underground cell, my beloved black being trembles. Tonight, passing headlights make the walls of my room quiver. Thousands of light rays poking me, I crouch, my face dark. The day of the first snow, white nowhere to be seen. The houses with lit windows. How the light pains the night.

Moon

On the empty playground
I play ball by myself
In the night wind, my footprints make many leaves, one leaf, one leaf
Then another leaf
Step by step
On the empty playground
The ball being dribbled—
Tong tong—thuds loudly

For the one who left me
Tong
Tong

I shoot into the basket!

I throw you
High!

Are you the hole I made blowing and puffing?
Tonight I bind
My face to the air

If I throw the ball, will the wind lift me, too?
The wind pushes me up
Every time I dribble tong tong
The hole in my leather face
Stretched out
Tight
Was I finally the hot air someone blew
A hole?

In the blank night sky
Someone slaps
The moon hard
Tong
Tong

Clean Rag

I want to lie down between the legs of women carrying water
The pails full of water from that well
I want to lie down between the legs of women coming uphill

To have fresh nutrients dug from the ground
Thick branches pour breast milk into small streams
That tree stands like a man and a woman embracing
Under it, I want to lie down and touch those women
Tainted by the act, the green stench reeks

They all climb the steep stairs
Until there are no steps
The dripping ends
Emptied on the fragile branches
In the air, a pink flower blooms

One blossoming tree wipes the sky
All winter this empty place gently scrubbed, the morning hours
The women carrying water keep
Their big, pink rags clean

Tonight

Rat

Devours a sleeping white rabbit
Dark blood gushes from its stomach
Rat eats a piglet drowned in a feeding trough
(Chunks of meat just grilled inside the uterus
Babies shivering after their first breath
Grease balls
Delicious and warm, drip blood with every bite)
Rat devours a newborn in a cradle
The baby's mother gone to wash dishes at a restaurant
Now Rat digs the ground
To move in and out of a fresh corpse

Rat has never eaten anything that hasn't been stolen
Rat crumples our shadows, blows our eyes open
Rat burrows underneath the fungus between our toes
Rat lifts his tail at the slightest rustle, even when stuffing his face
Every night hidden behind a surveillance camera
Rat spies our lovemaking
Every day he grinds down his growing teeth
Rat who brags about watching evolution for millennia

In between the small veins of our flashy interiors
Inside the slippery intestines beneath our soft skin
In between ten toes wriggling above a creaky floor
Inside the skull, protected from the beating of rain and wind
In the dark place of my body where no light penetrates
Inside the dead body tucked inside my belly for years
Sharpening his teeth to bite off ten fingers
Rat is

Tonight

Candy

I awake to find
A giant tongue licking me
Look at the saliva trickling down my body

The wet tongue is enormous
It licks me
Bare teeth gnaw on me
I'm a piece of meat carved from somewhere
I look at myself as a lump of flesh
Every night the bed gets soaked
I toss and turn inside the puddle
The drooling tongue gropes my hair
A department store lies down next to me
The tongue licks it
Cars keep circling, their lights blinking
I still wear my wet glasses in bed
I stroke the drooling department store
An invisible molar grips my hand, bites my face
As time passes, sweet water dries up and I wrinkle
I hug the department store
The tongue licks us together

(All night, fog and rain
Melt the department store
Inside a mouth)

Sad Love Machines in the Rain

A painter shakes a new brush
A hand draws lines down
Then quickly the body breaks down
Keeps standing back up
The crushed body, exhausted
Falls apart again

The café's pulp chairs are as small as bathtubs
That person is like a fish
Lips blowing—poong poong—cigarette smoke out
That person is a wet dog gripping a phone
Attached to the bathtub and yapping alone
The phone looks like a red aborted fetus, silent
I want to hide my phone in my skirt

When I'm in front of you, I say something
About the person I like
—Please think about it again
With my tongue, a dirty rag
I'd use to dry his wet hair

A searchlight passes over our heads once
Now I am a sleepwalker
Two hands held up
Standing faced to a barbed wire fence made of water
Walking out
Like a dog chained
Those sad love machines
Are still barking

Conservative Seoul Rats

Daddy and Mommy tuck us into bed
One by one, as many as Mommy's nipples
Softer than white bread, Mommy's tongue licks our eyes
With all of her strength. The darkness becomes cozy

Daddy drives home with fish heads and bad news
The sound of approaching footsteps, a fire truck's siren
Mommy's nipples harden
Mommy blocks the rat hole with her whole body, then covers our ears

A hairy leg enters the room
That's the man who throws his body bam bam against the house
Shaking it, but only his leg enters
His toenail rips Mommy's eyes, ears
His leather shoe tramples her skirt. Mommy doesn't breathe

He pokes around, in and out, as fast as the night's minute hand
All night, snarling can be heard
He pounds his head against a wall
Wailing. Mommy is dead. Daddy is nowhere
All night, a hairy mouth crushes the house, trying to break in

In the morning there is no trace of him and it's quiet
Mommy rises and breathes again
She attacks us for smelling strange from last night's horror
Then eats our intestines
Sharpens her teeth against the wall to scrape out our eyeballs
Then there's no one
As usual, Daddy and Mommy remain. It looks like Mommy is pregnant again.

How to Read the Morning

January: a shower of stars falls into the river and not to the ground

February: I packed my daily scriptures in a bag and fled the country—a child lost in space, the Challenger floating across the sky like a fish (jerk!)

March: all of the fish that left the river died

April: the scales of stars didn't rot but piled up. It's still possible to live in the North.

May: hurdles everywhere, a screen that won't shut off, a river emptied of fish flowed

June: the department store south of Han River collapsed, creating a puddle. The person who dreamed of an apple survived.

July: underground wells overflowed, a house sunk. Pigs cried on tops of roofs. Muddy waters, not a train, whistled down the tracks

August: in the Southeast, a flare of energy spread like a roll of silk. Then rain mixed with fish.

September: wind came to the door, crying open up open up. In the morning, a clump of the wind's hair tangled around the knocker. It was the 15th. East, West, South, North: who's the luckiest? Is that why six rounds were shot?

October: an apricot tree suddenly blossomed in late autumn. Every time it remembered, white fish washed up on the riverbank.

The eleventh lunar month...

December: dreamtime is now down to 30 seconds. The river froze again. Mix-ups, in White Out, fall thousands of feet down a crevasse, into the teeth of a dark blue river. Light as white as the South Pole where ice drifts. I am welded to the same heater again.

January again.