



DOOM OIL

Poems

by

Joanie St-Kaminsky

To share is an act of love.

To be named for your work is an act of love.

Thank you for reading.

Share at your will.

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DOOM OIL

Before June Seventh: “The Deterioration Puzzle”

1.

Contragrammatical monster! Parenthetical syntactic soup! I am the fibrous tendons of language! The sky is frenetic phonemes and this is silly! What am I doing here! I want the rudiments, I want whatever fractures of linguistics have their tenuous grip on my throat, the throats of those I love, the torn-out throats of those without voice for love.

I want to hear I want to speak I want my language back I want to take it from you and give it back with tenderness and care. If we had a voice in the first place, it's moaning: *You are hearing this voice and you are hearing that it's yours, to manipulate, to critique, to constrain, to deteriorate with rhetoric, to decimate with definition, and the voice is a glottal punch, the full embodiment of so much pain and joy and love, outrageous glory! I'm starving, when is dinner again?*

Give me a rule so there's a box from which I can free myself, since I do after all [want to be free], and there is no freedom in reaction; yet there's no possibility of a decontextualized world; yet I want to imagine it—

2.

I want so much for myself, but I'm only
a moment clear. When I say *Night on Bald Mountain*
think *practice*, when I say *practice* think
performance. Think *liquid* when you think
lucid. There are veins in reality, and there's a puncturing,
and there's a withdrawal. *Seed* means *potential*, and
potential
means *abundance of content*. I lost the third grade
spelling bee when I misspelled *etymology*,
and I *deserved* it [think *entitlement*]. I am thinking *form*,
and you are thinking *body*, when you mean *composure*.
You say *what shape*, I say *that's not what I meant*.

When I say *work*, think *fatigue*.
There are shadows that cast on shadows.
Watch where you're walking.
Pay attention.

3.

What a horrible thing I've done,
trying to make something as old once,
perform as something else. There is nothing
new in the moving dreams, just more boxes,
this time when I'm in the basement (and I
am lucid) I can see the space more clearly:

Here is the stone corridor where your
father jumps out of the empty cinder
room; here is a door I haven't seen.
Oh, yes, I came down here for the prop door.
For the film we are making. Didn't I?
No.... I came down here first to move the boxes
where the brown mushrooms are growing
into the guest house where it is damp
but at least it's not flooding. Did we talk about this?

I need a map of our house's dream corridors.
There are so many families still living here.
I need a colorwheel for when the landlord
paints the house in dreamcolors; I have no
palette for this! and the vines , for which
I have no fresh metaphor but find fresh
comfort in the creeping darkness; I am
losing track of the puzzle. If you have a riddle,
deliver it! I will answer.

In A Blue (Variations on a field)

*In the last field of tinsel-corn,
before the crater at the world's edge,
where the moon curls up every morning
in the fetal position and clicks its jaw
until it settles on a dream*

*In the last field of tinsel-corn,
we rode past on our bikes in gloam
dark-clothed and reflectorless,
crossing ourselves when we passed
that roadside cross*

*In the last field of tinsel-corn,
before the hungry tractors
lay waste to the wasted ears,
and clods of aerated soil
stand like insect mausoleums*

*In the last field of tinsel-corn,
beside the black roadwaters
where a squirrel squirms,
spewing iron water
into the safe deep ditchbanks*

*In the last field of tinsel-corn
my toes make conversation,*

standing in a crop formation
straining to feel you
brush my hair.

St. John in the Wilderness

*I now see my task much more simply,
as the discernment and living out of my
vocations: figuring out how G-d is calling
me to love and then pouring myself out
into that love.*

— Eve Tushnet

1.

Before they caught us, we danced in the parish yard
nine times, hipbones dividing shadows like schisms,
a glass of red wine—I hate red wine—in my hand.
I have seen the altar staged and the altar broken down;
seen the black bears crouched in the kudzu pining
for garbage cans brimming with dank Catholic trash;
can tell You what shape a woman's lips take
when she wants to kiss a man, and when she doesn't.
Just once more, I want to be pushed over and devoured
like garbage, and pick plastic bags from the hyacinth
with her. My *Yom ha-Din*, I don't know what love is, but
I can guess: for St. Augustine heard, when they buried
John, the earth over his grave still heaved.

2.

Last night I suffered greatly in a dream.
Did You see me, finger-deep in red earth,
digging holes for hyacinth I'll never plant?
I wanted the earth to tremble, and it did.
Like kudzu swaying in the wind, or
the voice of Elohim crying in the wilderness.
And I was not ashamed at her coming.
I am most myself beneath her, tearing up
the earth as though it can be filled.

3.

Sometimes I too crouch amongst the kudzu,
holding my boyish hips, "I've Been Loving You
Too Long" hyacinthine against the memory of love.
Though You have me, You cannot have my private
sabbaths. I carry this small-chested boything over
the cedar-pine and cypress threshold, over the
heaving earth, and into the wilderness.

Eclipse at Idiots' Mouth

I can't tell you much about this,
and what I can tell you is wrong, but
a bat with bioluminescent goop in its mouth
looks like a lighting-bug. No it doesn't.

I don't know what a reflection is, but it's not
the same as a photograph, so I am
a reflection if I'm not a photograph.
In any other lifetime, I would have made

a great pogo stick. The moon takes
up the same arc-minutes as the sun,
but it's different, and probably not

because you can look at it.
That was a great show. We couldn't see
anything for awhile.

○

The sun passed. We thought about it.

Watching a Squirrel Pulverized by the Passage of an Electrical Current Through Its Body After Chewing Through a Power Line Decompose Over the Course of Several Months

1.

I wanted to call you. It was dark-noon.

I was rubbing the blood off my razor.

Early that summer, a tree collapsed.

I have been without power before.

We had a generator then.

Don't lecture me about correlation.

Don't lecture me about power.

I have been without power before.

2.

I have weeped over the bodies of unknown things,
but never before collected their bones.

It's hard to see a corpse and not think
it belongs to you. I took vertebrae. Pieces of jaw.
Synecdochal stuff. I say: this is the squirrel
who knocked out the power grid. The lineman
says this happens all the time. In Schenectady
my birth certificate is filed. There's an open
staircase at that courthouse. Big enough
for a girl's body to slip through.

3.

How can a squirrel
fall
artificially
into power

The song goes: *I need
you more than
want you*

4.

Here is what's left:

Pulverized wood
I mistook for spine

Blood [on my face,
on the body]

Seventy dollars
I will never call to ask for

Two vertebrae
A piece of jaw

A tree that's gone
A body that's gone

I'm Thinking of You. It's October

I don't want to remember the first
time, fertilized in early November,
so far from finding a home in my body.
*I would rather be anywhere else, I thought, but
I'm glad I'm here, in the pines, and I can hear
your thickets thick with toads, and pretend
your body is mine, and I am home.*

'I see no life with you, who can't believe
in G-d, with your honeycomb heart
and mouth full of hair. Nobody's home:
won't you come over?' I need your proboscis
in my throat to draw out the pollen-words —
the family-words — the words that make me
productive — for I am barren. A pitcher-plant.
A saccharine promise. A god-eater.

Tick in the Windswept Grass

Blown back—air rivulets
and calls itself a formed thing,
without a name, that tosses
the tick from stalk to air
and the endlessness of being
carried off into an object which is not
an object, which is only air, after all,
but isn't it? Endless, the feeling,
and it does end, from air to stalk,
another place to dream of blood,
the nectar of those who take
from the earth the nectar of those
who take from the sun. It's
some horrible gift, to be treated
by something so tiny, as a flower
(with as much chance to exist,
granted), and find another
existing who has your needs in them,
and to drink of them, and be filled
until the drink is undrunk, until
another call to thirst is called
from somewhere outside the body.
From where does the impetus to feed
attack the body? To be diseased—
to be filled with the memory of being drunk—
to be so wholly devoured by the tick,

atrophied, made useless, for no body's purpose.

Saying It

My heart is divided into many birdsongs,

and I am hearing my name tasted

and I am not wanting to be devoured

I am wanting to be told

this is your name thank you

i love you say it back

I am saying it in a dream

on your neck in beetle-tusks

I am shaping the words in mouth

when I retell the fairytale where you untie

the ribbon from my neck but I leave out

the specifics I am saying it

Rainbow Passage

When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air,
ask me for the definitions. I am, after all,
but a half-named creature, phantom
resemblance, subjective and deviant,
mirror-not-woman-not-real-thing.
Used in a sentence: "That's your name?"
In a room rimmed with eyes, I am defined
out of existence. A body innominate
is a division of white light into many
carcasses, left in wantless caverns
of collapsing microflora, so many I's,
so much time "grounded in science,"
or else in the ground. Where is my body?
People look but no one ever finds it.
Grim world, world-on-stilts, rope-walker
with its path high above, and its two ends
tethered to chromosomes, ask me
for the definitions. You sunshine animal,
you meaning-maker, ask not
what I am called. Ask me for the definitions.
I should know fully, since I have been fully known.
There is, according to legend, a boiling pot
(or whatever you call it) where unseen
echolocators grieve their molten names.
Please, ask me for the definitions.
They act like a prism and form a rainbow,

but I've walked alone at night enough
to know that light's a cage. If I remain unfound,
bury me nameless, beneath my work, for the ghost-gods.

After Stackhouse

With You

All ends begun

At the trailhead

the lungs of the forest,
A breath of attrition

*[Abrasion, under its strictest
definition, is commonly confused*

with attrition]

The fennel in square knots
Glistering obsidian

Silence colored dry-mush

The ground, wounded, huddled together

When the oceans were purple
and the sky thicket-moss green

The cedars run through it
And stand on stilted heads

flat against a flat-Washington dawn

I'm seeing things

The railyard innards

Asleep at the Omega Motel

There is a difference

Filtering light through your skin

I want to be the color you love

Moss-thick, nectar-person

The slimy deep
water opens

There is a path

We are walking

Adiantum-haired
In the cedar-cold

With you

The Body Redeemed: “DOOM OIL”

Again, the body is found at the dark outposts
by the tracks, and I rediscover time eludes us.
“The world is latticework,” you say, and mean
it. But holy shit, that’s stupid. Implying space for us.
Had we but world enough. Time is a resource,
which makes it precious. But I waited so long
for you to love me back. I’m not ashamed.
That time was mine, and I used it wisely.

Judge not that you be not judged

I’ll take the body on my tongue. It tastes
sanctimonious when it’s in my hands.
I want to be humble before you, sweet Jesus,
my first and final boyfriend, for I’ve devoured
you, which means we are married, like it or not.
Seriously, though—I’m trying to remember
what it was like. To take part in human flesh.
All that’s coming up is something like Wonder bread.

Who knows what’s good or bad

Today, caution is advised. Take care: there’s no room
for mistakes. Let’s talk about body again—
body as vessel for the spirit, body as walking carcass.
The body may not be you, but you’re defined by the body.

Caution is advised. Take care. There's no room for mistakes.
And keep your fluids to yourself. Time will make short work
of all that your body provides. You are not long for this world.
All you've got is time.

But don't forget the bodiless, wanting for a body

The Seedroom

After language, what remains?
Once the seed of language is cleaved
from the sonorous tree it once contained;

Once wet sand leaves its leaves
pickled; once you have forgotten
scheme, its tincture will dissolve

all you once found rotten.
The clock-hand long passed
recompense; the overwritten

poem shirks form because it's bored,
or because it went to the dark fields
of memory to recall. Sacred words

blossom into dreamworlds,
saying things like *are you listening?*
That's good. To write is to build

precarious nests, strong
in the sense of twigs and pine-needles,
component, breathless, unwilling.

The poem is: wrought of conditionals.
Is: a never-ending sip of the Big.

Is: traveling through tunnels

that ancient language-voles dug
and filled with dried chrysanthemum.
Go somewhere early, somewhere fog

touches itself to the fuse of your genome,
and touch yourself there. This is painful work,
admittedly, but don't allow yourself to come

to conclusions. As you walk,
consider the trees.

As of this publication:

Joanie St-Kaminsky is a faggot, transsexual, nonbinary trans girl, high futch, queer, Jew, poet, artist, anarchic, disabled, neurodivergent, autistic, crazy, and whatever else you are going to call her.

She uses she/her pronouns if you are cis and uncomfortable with that; it uses it/its pronouns if you are cis, consider yourself a trans ally, and are too comfortable using she/her pronouns for it, or trans and uncomfortable using it/its pronouns; and she uses she/it pronouns if you're a faggot who loves gender fuckery.

At the time *DOOM OIL* was written, she lived in so-called Asheville, North Carolina, occupied Tsalagi land. She currently lives in so-called Crown Heights, Brooklyn, occupied Canarsie land.

