

TREATISE ON DROWNING

A Thesis

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by

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for *Mom and Dad* and for *Trent*

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## Treatise on Drowning

## **perspective from pitch and tent**

no low tones fill the  
hollow temple bell of earth  
resting you inside

high green covers this  
prehistoric black in the  
flood year, thrush and fish

rust canyon echoes  
nail patches: do they use glue  
or coffin staples?



## **pulley wheel and medicated mimesis**

I'm losing you in  
synapse, rebuilding us in  
strange memorial

here the sea is calm,  
laying flat against the earth  
stretched parachute silk

**molecular stabilization of liquid surface area, rapture**

is this enough for  
us, to sit on two floating  
rafts, untied, on fire

**carpeted hallway without windows**

under water we  
only hear the hushed voices  
of secretive fish

gills moved around you  
in the silent thick for days.  
we looked there, there and

cavernous hideout  
you rogue! what are they saying?  
hold my feet down too.

**and after that, the flying sequence**

anxiety: the  
jaws of life crack and splay me.  
innards full of you.

(this is banal, this  
is banality. this is  
all just filler sand.)

a live autopsy:  
are you watching? We are spleen,  
cadaverous waste.

**arms upon arms to an earth**

you called your Eden  
desert, immutable wayplace  
of God, pulsing, still.

I called, newly  
staked, and dusted your ear, pressed  
together the hum.

the tree's square hands  
punctured our shine's reddening cracks,  
its loud birth swallowed

the overfolded  
map whole in temporary  
green, first bush, dune, hill.

**superimposed, your father, who art on top of the dam**

the spillway screams that  
it will crush us, that it will  
eat our lovers and

children; he screams  
we won't see water like this  
for ten years, I scream

I could be thrown in  
cycle happily, it will  
eat our lovers, our

**sweaty excavation on waters' edge**

at the end of this  
(pilgrimage) I hope to find  
you waiting for me

on this gray island  
only I am away from  
you. I will return.

I sit with one seat  
empty so the air can hold  
my hand. sad trade wind

## **bliss**

there was a song you  
found in a used car, cardboard  
box in the back seat

lucky tape deck, it  
sang trashy demo copies  
to my balcony

you had to hold down  
the plastic rewind button  
to listen to me

(flicker)



## **sleepwrinkled linguistics as installation art**

you said you'd live in  
a tent and travel the skin  
of me, lay in the stakes

## **black on black frost skyline**

the sky was open,  
we watched the stars die, launch their  
tiny, old bodies

you commandeered my  
sleeve, slid your hand from mine  
up to hold my arm

look. do you see the  
destroying angel standing  
here, yes, on my right hand.

## quotidian

you held my hand in  
both of yours because I said  
I eat cheap ramen

**the gift you made of a coconut shell ring**

but the drawer-buried  
watch you probably wore on  
water, long way down,

**(telephone)**

I hold the throat to my ear, disembodied  
re-embodied, a darling miniature  
of my capacity. This is how large I am.  
I breach the pacific in seconds. My voice here  
and here and here and here.  
Knock, and it will answer. Leave  
a message and a hollow tone becomes the return  
a dove, a boomerang, and the holy spirit.  
Dear god please let him pick  
up. pick up. Instead she picks up  
picks the tone she chooses, a tiny record  
mimics, mimicry, see also narrative voice over:  
cries  
the unthinkable: we've sailed past the point of no return.  
Please call back, call back I'll tell you then  
in code, voice check, one-two  
one  
Her voice severs an apple core, burns the seeds,  
this is how large I am. Sliced along longitudes  
in seconds. The voice here  
and here and here (no pictograms: no one says boat  
because there was never a boat just water.) Un pacified  
in seconds. This is my stem, the tide of  
who you've reached, she is  
relieved, secretly, that I answered in hologram,  
allowed myself to unveil horror  
as it happened, I grip the knife here,  
and here and here,  
the serrated boomerang, the obliterated dove,  
the pigeon's throat soldered with the message.

**Precautions:**

S— has taken the phone,  
We stop by the store for frozen yogurt  
and whole foods. He doesn't have the phone  
yet, but he will because she can't answer it.  
Just in case, he says, comments on the entry  
from 'really cute girl' and some irreconcilable  
nonsense. S— shows me around  
the store without looking me in the eyes.  
He's not taking the day off. No one speaks  
out loud.

## Waterproof

The things that become waterproof,  
a legacy of stuff evolving:  
the watch I took from the drawer  
the mascara my mother asked for in the middle of the night  
    (and black nylons, please)  
seaworthy platters, containers with airtight lids  
the lids we close carefully varnished

the tin phone begins to rust  
under pressure: the single numbers leak,  
seep message into mechanism, flood  
cogs, overrun pumps.  
    (the bilge in the back spills)  
with whom am I speaking? A missed call  
exhumes the happiest voice, the tie to our former lives  
the last time  
the last time, the last time  
it surfaced

## Responsibilities:

I am the second, a secondary life  
located somewhere north, somewhere  
people go for graduations, but not  
because he'd admit that he liked it

after all. 1. unsaid.  
no one will know but you unless;  
and you have all the numbers, so;  
but no one will ask, because, well;

I begin with a.

minutes waterlogged. bilge in the back.

I call north, sound the hollow  
siren, the second:  
they'll drive all night to be there  
by Friday.

(2. the obituary. A lexicon  
of 200 words or less)

3. peel pictures from albums full  
of everything before me, primary  
school, et al. Careful with his  
mother's log of dates, places, people

There are at least seven  
Books. a watery eclipse

I bridge. I begin with 1.



**abysmal complex: memorial sky**

## **cheilosopic exhumation**

you kissed the window,  
facing glass with chapstick whorles  
for a forensic

rebirth. I could grow  
your lips on a petri dish  
twelve months later; or

could I kiss you one  
more time darkly from the glass  
and feel you push back

hold me until I  
get there, are you waiting, please,  
I was something once.

## Grassflat aphasia

single seedy head,  
its dandelion cotton  
compacted with grass.

face up: blank over  
surfacing fire ants trembling  
into shirt, jeans, bra

still. as though opened  
forcibly and suspended  
over your dark shell.

my bitten hand pulls  
the flexing stem, a trade for  
the groomed, pink jar

without lexicon  
for this, what else can I do  
but bring you flowers

**when the decision is finally made**

bleeding frozen  
under cold magnolias;  
the sky pales to match.

## **abandonment for two**

you gave me a bike,  
a cruiser with a light that  
shines when you peddle

it's black, the better  
of two; you named the red one  
like a proud father

and swear they were left  
for rust at the rack, locked and  
abandoned to us

I finger the dents,  
wonder who misses my gift,  
whether you meant it.

**on the third day, prescience**

we wait in your room  
wonder if the pieces here  
knew before we did

## A weighted scale, a hypotenuse

I peel you from ten  
albums, check vacations and  
suburbs for you, check

your mother's blue script  
check you are who I think you  
are. check the proof.

it will bear what they  
balance for or against me  
in the coming days.

## **a flooded grave**

wind moves in strata  
breathes a high transparency,  
you pass this in waves

we stand in the green  
of death, a tent under the  
sunburned canyon wall

I am unnamed in  
grief, not your widow, nor blood  
my ribs are all mine

introductions are  
long. fallen faces forget  
the look of water.



**wet feathers, flying fish, quiet thrashing**

mythical thrasher  
do you have wings that arch  
from your shoulder blades?

## Within the reproachable range of red dirt Alone

red ground a silent  
slouch, sticky and dry under  
the nail (the digging)

the bare, dirty stretch  
holding borders against crab  
grass, manufactured

and rolled inside the  
gravel parking strip, a piece  
waits grassless, reddened

low air picks a dirge,  
erosion before this berth,  
dry ground, lost-named.

rock in hand, I dig,  
sweep dust into shifting wind,  
one shallow hole now,

(maybe more later)  
dirt affirming spaced bodies,  
parallel: I am

belly down, clawing  
myself into this earth hand  
over clod-filled hand

mounds, stubbed rocks exhale  
your dust, a root, dry cuts and  
I swear I will get

to you, I will until  
I bleed your impacted dirt  
and the red nothing

but the heaving of  
the earth against the sky.



**arrhythmia, the late show**

for two months like an  
erratic pump pump, my eye  
spasms, sees nothing

insomnia: verb;  
accelerated skin or  
gauze, anesthetic

your pajamas smell  
like terror, legs moving like  
suspended paper

dehydrate, tic, watch  
this eye socket wrench, tic, hold  
you with tiny hands

**november in to**

hold strands against  
my chest, your down dishwater  
blond, scoop handfulls

find my clothes dusty  
and clung to it under red  
wood slats, cobwebs, through

slugslime and aphids,  
shimmy through the crawlspace, I  
would roll in it, lean

for the breeze-rolled grass-  
bound hair left, the good student  
sitting tall, still for

scissoring, clumps falling  
feathery from the last haircut,  
your hair is still under the porch.

## From the desk of linguistic fishmongery

your house grows foreign  
(I wait) the basement closes  
our dusty blankets.

stale sinks your room. most  
clothes gone, a drawer becomes a  
chair and brown curtains.

your desk's overflow  
of pictures in triplicate,  
grossly piled cards

and my letters, leafed  
through like an open rib cage,  
house the grayish film.

it would be nothing  
if this stretch housed us wholly  
in private stasis

**birthland without jungle scene**

it wouldn't have been  
possible for me to fold  
enough paper cranes

**treatises**

a hollow, over  
folded map of the island,  
the left-side ocean

forces itself on  
the sky like a foreigner,  
eviscerating

I hear your birth come  
late and washed, blooded and pressed  
to breathe, again, please again,



**the lid rolls private; make sure**

I think you were stitched  
over the eye, but there are  
only lashes here

**collage, black glass frame**

black on black, a two  
dimensional mountain lies  
on the sweat skinned sky

you are all black, the  
back of an eyelid, I tell  
you, I'm going blind

this forgets like a  
vine, green on the brain, ripe  
and drowning fruitless

**empty skybound benches or primal scream therapy**

it was lush when I  
got there, see the pictures from  
the red ferris wheel

the hospital across  
watches the water coming  
like dreams on repeat

upshore I paid ten  
dollars, roughly, for one  
ticket, held up one

finger even though  
I know all the numbers now,  
that is all I know,

one circle of red  
babble, an airforce target,  
flaming circus hoop

**illiteracy, camouflage**

I walk between two  
kanji-shaped bus stops, think  
about jumping ship

**myopia, blood function, release**

wanted a closer  
look at the army-navy  
hospital inside

I knew I wouldn't  
hear your baby screams or find  
the rusted forceps

how could I explain  
at the gate what I wanted,  
how far I'd traveled

enough to see the  
door, the plastic men marching  
from concrete houses

this finality  
in ducts, vents, lays your dusted  
hand on my shoulder

## **hollow-boned scaffolding**

in church I draw wings  
held on with backpack straps, a  
transfiguration

they unfold, fill like  
parachutes, slow us into  
our inky new lives

**island-bound birds**

coaled up skin cracks, heaves  
a bloody atomizer  
tarred and drowning

on deck. swab, starboard  
rig the body open, quick!  
quiet is on fire.

island-bound birds, we  
drink up the small, loaded boat  
shove organs aside,

we dance like sugar  
marrow and wash ashore, our  
bones laced like hands pray.

**after wondering whether my taxes pay for upkeep of the city temple, and  
whether or not you will meet me there if I wait long enough (I)**

walk this fishgut lined  
street to its crisis, expect  
some phantom limb pain

consider: is this  
thought-speech deification  
of you, revenant?

think about praying  
instead, dear God, could you please  
take down a message

reserve a temple  
bench and settle on mouthing  
eastward to your ear



**treatise on drowning, or: for two voices in 5/4**

a new prophetess  
dreamed it from the red apex  
of a carnival

*cranial plate shift  
or earthquake buries the ferris  
wheel across the street*

waits in bed for your  
father; wants to check your flight,  
he insists on sleep

*subterfuge at best  
the brain mutes every song I  
remember. I spar.*

soothsayer sleeps sound,  
remembers after take-off  
to warn us of heights

*who writes the end if  
ending is proof enough, red  
ferris wheel, red flight*

(the pink postcards come  
after) I move to your room  
someone leaves the door

*superimposed photos  
open your cliff red with a  
water wheel, your ash*

griefblinded prophet,  
how could you have known, the fault  
lines start to rupture

**hanami (a verbal definition)**

The car is idling  
in front of a single tree,  
white like suicide.

Clutch at the prime in  
water, the kamikaze.  
This is life ethereal,

that X might catch flame,  
sear your corneas, cauterize  
the remainder.

**before the resurrection**

the pulsing organ  
an incubated egg veins,  
blasts the basted shell

## **basins for the remainder**

I'll come home to you  
on Easter and lie in the  
warm season some time

fold myself into  
the rootless ground, exhale  
and show you the gut

of the matter, cut the  
staples, roll out the viscous  
bobbin, read aloud.

**an isomer for blood sugar**

dream-side we wade through  
tightly packaged words, boxes  
full of slow blood, calm.

backstroke through our names  
and thick urgency lapping  
heavy on our chests

we're in honey, my  
eyelids snotted shut, you sing  
us softly to sleep

## gaping

our skeletal birds  
circle concentric by strings,  
pinched and taut they lift

these hollow bones flute  
from center, sing breathy hymns  
with fingers tingling

you and I read sky,  
circle single wingedly  
taste air in our eyes

## hanami

A parking lot full  
white to the knees. The station  
looks on longingly.

Its lover, skeletal,  
clean and alone, stands deep  
in her dropped laundry.

## HANAMI



**in the green of second years**

We could be blocked together in old stone: the elephant of the dream, mossed over on the east side. If the cement, in its wet infancy had known. If the genesis of solid eyes and tusks had also mapped bowls of space to cup us from disintegration, green and flowering.

Readied, you would spin the pillows, pull palm fronds across the door. I would unfold viney, follow east to east unraveling, to know its stony mouth.

## Hanami

The car is idling in front of a single tree white like suicide. Clutch at the prime in water, a kamikaze. This is life ethereal, that X might catch flame, sear your corneas, cauterize the remainder.

## Instructions in English

Stop trying to cross the street. While underground, Seoul will shift and you will never surface on the side with Starbucks, never. The riot police will give you furtive directions, hands over their batons and you'll be afraid to duel them with your map. You should bow, but how low, how many times? The International Committee on Deferentially Inclined Positions has no official position: you look like a bobble-head toy. Stop it. At kitty-corner: Nam Dae Mun. If you get there, hold your face like a sign that reads, "passing through, just hungry."

Ho Chi Minh is a tiled room full of border guards and stamps, a cement-floored annex of short and slender stalls, a slowly filling bucket and rag. CAUTION, an ATM, \$15 to crack bones, \$4 fries. Japanese tourists will break bottles of ketchup and apologize, but not profusely.

Train stations, but not trains, are illegal in Kaohsiung. Most use miniature trampolines provided by Kaohsiung Transit Authority to propel them into moving cars. Parachute sales have skyrocketed. Imports from Siem Reap are highly sought-after collector's items - private collections are stored in liquid at room temperature and best viewed from a supine position.

Gion is a paper lantern woman with wood-paneled arms and orange, lacquered ribs. Her arms are slender, slide with splintery ease but only at eye level, into tea rooms. They would gesture to your men, if you had any.

On the Tonlé Sap, baskets of grease writhe, full of crickets and fuzzy burnt spiders. Whole, legs delicately maneuvered to conserve each tiny hip, each socket clutches the crunching nail. Bodies hollowed, filled with saucy guts – the mechanics of tireless fingers make cuisine of red food rations. The severed leg catches in your gullet, flutters and swabs the esophageal elevator, points its single finger at your hunger, ferry side.

The music coming from Shinjuku next door signals street-crossing at angles;  
birds-eye: a human asterisk. Between the concrete strata is a layer of thick mochi  
for absorbing shock and aftershock, and can be eaten in cases of emergency.  
Tourists are given free travel-sized trowels and a preponderance of illegible  
pocket tissues.



A corner kiosk selling dog heads houses ½ of Phnom Penh's population. Greasy tarp frayed for fringe provides the rotisserie-side residences with shade. Mounds of clothes and bone surface in the dust. High school becomes a museum. Japanese tourists are scarce.

## **Assimilation**

Ume-boshi puckers, a pair of overripe and vinegared lips, a plum, a peach, a peck of pickled, wait for the sting in the glands, wash it down in a salivary swallow, coo for rice or explode darling pigeon, you don't stand a chance.

## **International House of Pancakes**

In the room with windows there are bulk bins full of babies you appease with plastic fruit and plastic blueberry pancakes. Deal tiny plastic spatulas to each of your dexterous and stylishly dressed mothers and together serve up cardinals, pan flipped to their berry correlative. Most babies find them irresistibly delicious. Your days filled with insatiable counting, evening short-stack orders, one for baby, one for mother, one for baby, etc. until the smallest reaches across the table, helps himself to your pancakes, spits out his first word; (yes) it's in English.

## Miyuki

Miyuki is a large woman, she'll admit it, "I'm a large woman," and when she forces you to dress in her purple velvet sleeveless, you become a heavy parachute, a plum kept from the icebox. She has investors waiting to bow low and make your acquaintance, see if you'll sell on TV and if you're genki enough for children to buy into you. You'll shave your upper lip because you know you're the prettiest in the line-up, wear men's boxers and dance like a chicken. Miyuki eats chocolate, never thanks you for the jumbo-sized box because she's been to Costco in America. She's a large woman, she'll admit it.

## Obachan

Obachan says ego wakarimasen. Totemo. Stuttering around the house about the trash, about the recycling, she points to the fan. Then to you. PALM-splats a fist-sized spider you hadn't noticed in the wood of the old-house. Just slide the door closed. She'll go back to sleep, or to drink, or tell someone who can translate that she'll be making nasubi, which means, roughly, that you should order pizza.

## **Hanami**

Pause two strokes into the oil – she'll ask where are you from and do you like a Japanese men? Be ready to eat squid in a single spongy bite and talk to relatives in Hawaii. You are a business lunch in the garden, but they're done with sushi and want to eat the model.

The President of the International Bank of Japan has strong ancestry, he tells you. You nod.

## Hoisted

Sometimes it's a parade and bankers in fundoshi carry you overhead on wooden slats. Your roommate thinks it's a striptease and calls you Jane, but the man you love is white and covering his butt with a speedo. It's too late, a sea of naked hands writhes westward under the slats and you remember drowning. The pilgrimage, the hospital where he was born and the ferris wheel across the street. Two blocks short of sand the sea will stop drop and roll you back home anyway. Dionysus hands Hades his pants.

## Lupin

Lupin thinks you're cute and everyone in the office knows it. He walks you to the Mini-Stop for ice cream, but you can't recall how you know that he plays the guitar - they won't tell you in English, and you don't know that word. Carrots are good, he says, because he's not a little boy anymore, and where did you get this Ranch Dressing? We would swim in its whiteness if we could fit in the bowl. Someone says kareeohkee and you deftly translate, kara oke, the empty orchestra swells and you lean in for another carrot. You'll both have excellent eyesight, but only you will know why.



## Nojiriko

In the mountains there aren't bathrooms and you'll have to go to a ski-lodge to bathe. Rotemburo, she tells you, is the reason why you're steaming naked outside. Men are separate, but six days later you see them clumped at the two-story window. The high price of root vegetables is an elderly tour where the mute is assumed dumb. She pretends to be outraged, dries your back where you can't reach. The sakura line is south and moving.

## **Bonsai**

The harbor is a shoebox full of bonsai trees and everyone is the size of lego men, except. This is no Jack-and-the-Beanstalk story, though your golden locks, now those might be magic. If a little white dog asks you to lunch, turn and walk back down the planks. Then:

Think fast sprint cherry bomb off the long end.

Check the weather before you book tickets. There are no refunds if the water turns to charcoal under your fingers.

## **Meme**

You find out three months later that her real name isn't Meme, after the huge, almond eyes she carries; it's Sadako: whose strokes mean, respectively, cancer, crane, casualty. Bronze skyward arms at the memorial. But she is none of these things. Meme repeats your name in writing like a tiny echoing heartbeat separated with commas she learned in Australia, learns the rhythms of eyelids, knows the treble your glass.

## **A pull-down map**

The children in Kan-onji will call you question or a crayon, call you a master of questions, and speak in crayons except when asking if you like potato chips. They will offer you potato chips and prawns. Scratch that. They will offer you potato chips that taste like prawns and a scratch-n-sniff sticker from a ledger in the glass genkan. Across the street she says she can't have children and you expect her to pull down maps of ovaries, cross sections of pelvises, locate failure, but it's a waiting room not a chip factory and you have to get back to class.

## **Hanami**

Chicken nuggets become the currency of cherry sauce at the American embassy, but you are no spring chicken. You can't economize when it comes to familiarity, a bridge in the roof of your mouth, a memory bank filled with golden arches.

## Shino

Study her arms, upper lip, her eyelids: she'll teach you about Isamu Noguchi, translation and bridges for months before you realize she's completely hairless. Bald under hair you've complemented and thought cut. Lithe. Her blood type means she's afraid of driving, prefers language to engagement, will have a loveless marriage to a man who sells sports equipment. She demurs because her follicles are closed and then hand delivers 20-year-old post cards of Kochi, the beach where the samurai disemboweled himself.

## **Mika**

The good ol' boys yakiniku joint server waits on: yakuza like uncles with machine guns. Her heels are like ankles with machine guns. But you've never seen her. You just drive past the red flagged door where he said it happened and now he's staining your tatami. Get him a tissue. The flowers, at least, are gone.

## **A Lottery**

At the mini-mart you unwittingly play the lottery and win a hello kitty cosmetics bag. This is translated badly. Someone suggests a victory lap down the aisle, and why not? You think of filling your new bag with tiny turkeys or Cornish game hens - smaller - Supermarket sweep style, then making a break for it, hopping the train to Marugame where you could live on your sushi-sized fowl, plan your next move.



## **By Law**

By law all vehicles must remain at the white line for two full cycles of the traffic signal before proceeding through, if, on the left hand, a tall blonde with uncovered shoulders is waiting for the hand to turn into a white man. Wait for her signal: the blonde knot will unfold over itself like a flag under the rising sun.

## **Hanami**

A parking lot full white to the knees. The train station looks on longingly. Its lover, skeletal, deep in her dropped laundry.

Near-drowning is a term used to describe almost dying from suffocating under water. It is the last stage before actual drowning, which often results in death.Â Near-Drowning. Medically reviewed by Stacy Sampson, D.O. â€” Written by Kristeen Moore â€” Updated on September 29, 2018. Causes. Symptoms. Definition of drowning in the Idioms Dictionary. drowning phrase. What does drowning expression mean? Definitions by the largest Idiom Dictionary.Â Like this video? Subscribe to our free daily email and get a new idiom video every day! a drowning man will clutch at a straw. proverb Someone who is desperate will try to use anything for help, even if it is really no help at all. Facing the possibility that his marriage might be over, John began visiting psychics to help him decide what to do. A drowning man will clutch at a straw. An update on drowning in 2018 | Drowning is a significant and neglected public health problem mostly affecting young children. The definition of drowning has recently been | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate.Â An update on drowning in 2018. September 2018. Revue mÃ©dicale suisse 14(617):1565-1567. The instinctive drowning response is an instinctive reaction that occurs in humans when close to drowning. While distress and panic may sometimes take place beforehand, drowning itself is quick and often silent. A person close to the point of drowning is unable to keep their mouth above water long enough to breathe properly and is unable to shout. Lacking air, their body cannot perform the voluntary efforts involved in waving or seeking attention. Involuntary actions operated by the autonomic nervous Discover the symptoms of both wet drowning and dry drowning, and learn how to protect young children from drowning in pools, as well as lakes, rivers, and oceans. All victims of drowning should be evaluated by a health care professional.