

**from 'Earth Per Verse –  
A Catalogue of Suspicions and Dreams'**

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**Tiré de 'La terre en poème –  
catalogue de soupçons et de rêves'**

*Allant d'un rêve qui décrit les différences perçues par un enfant entre la bitte et le con au réconfort litannique du Je offert à l'enfant Libby pour l'assurer qu'elle est maintenant en sécurité, cette séquence poétique raconte impitoyablement et en détail, en s'appuyant sur la reconstitution des rêves et des souvenirs, la dynamique émotionnelle, sociale et physique d'un cas d'abus sexuel d'un enfant. 'La mémoire est une chose étrange une douleur étrange, ses petites flammes venant lécher et réveiller cette partie-ci du cerveau ou encore celle-là'. Comment cette violence se perpétue et se supporte en silence (il n'y a pas d'autre choix à ce moment-là), l'explication en est donnée de façon efficace dans le rêve des parents qui préface les souvenirs de leur fille.*

8.

dream on the train from Toronto to Kingston:

disembodied dicks move floaty through the air  
looking for mouths to hide in looking  
for warm and wet places to hide in be  
safe in be loved in so dis  
'em bodied and vee-flying

in  
formation  
south  
bound  
like  
canada  
geese

the pussies sit resolutely on  
their haunches their bodies  
refusing to move refusing to go any  
where smile their floppy  
hairy smiles  
are part  
of the  
legs  
and bellies and anal  
crevices that come  
together in vulval  
em brace

9.

dream of the father:

tree  
my cheek against your bark  
your grey and brown and black  
roughness of skin your five o'clock  
beard rubbed hard  
on my five-year-old face

your leather belt zaps the air  
electric eel  
coming after me

SNAP SLAP SNAP SLAP

its black tongue sears my thigh red  
I'm a fish on a rock far from water

(this is also a dream of the mother      the mother in this  
dream speaks in whispered italics      in audible  
after which      silence      always silence      the mother  
in this dream lives in (side) parentheses)

10.

the father's dream:

the dark cold basement in Bukavina    soldiers'  
boots    black potatoes    spring mud    the sound  
shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh    the sky breaking into  
yellow storm clouds    bile vomit mucus blood  
the flesh-smelling earth sprayed in my face

11.

and the mother's dream:

The house in Brooklyn, Mama up before the sun, making a fire in the stove, two beds and nine sleeping children. Maybe this morning I'll get the special kiss. But Mama leans over the pot of boiling water too far and one of her braids not yet circled primly around the crown of her head slips down along the outside of the pot and catches fire the fire eating its way up the twisted grey and yellow braid the orange flame licking salaciously at the faded yellow strands working its way slowly up to the ear and inside the ear all the way to the brain and the head explodes like an angry sun and I do not get the special kiss.

14.

memory is a strange thing a strange sting its little  
brain flames hotting up this and that corner of skull  
till cells flare into snapshots and faint  
recordings and the tactile the sense of  
touch those words sound too soft and gentle for  
these brute remembered pieces and yes the sense  
of taste and smell are there like five-herb  
tea and five-flavor soup is five-senses memory like  
a full-course meal of shame flaming its way to anger  
but for now the pieces present themselves

small legs

in a courtyard and

long legs next to them and a hand is taken and he  
talks to her kindly and gently and she  
is pleased by the attention and they walk  
out of the hot sun into the cool and pleasant crumbly  
concrete basement dark of the building and

a large hand on a tiny vagina the choke  
in the throat from his arm-thing in a tiny mouth the  
taste of soft flesh become lethal like pokers the feel  
of her tongue on the veins the feel of the hard thing  
covered with flesh as warm as mother's hands the hard  
thing thudding into the walls of her mouth inside her  
mouth the hard thing covered with soft flesh battering  
the roof of her mouth the smell of cool stone and male sweat  
and the smell of the thing under her nose slamming into  
her mouth filling her mouth entirely her mouth collapsing  
around it like a balloon sucked inside out

so sudden

who knows at first what it is it feels like an arm  
whose hand was amputated the pink and pointy stump  
insisting into the throat that this space  
is stump space is his she can't breathe

when did the amputated-hand arm-thing withdraw  
from the mouth did it shoot its stuff  
first what happened after that how did  
he end it it *was* ended how did she leave  
the basement all *that* is missing the next  
snapshot is in the same tiny mouth it is the mouth  
telling what happened telling the adults the  
protectors what happened and nothing  
happening from the telling the next shot

is in the courtyard again at his mercy and being five and  
he is sixteen and your eight-year-old brother has been told  
to keep him away from you he's been told by your father who  
refuses to protect you and refuses to let your mother  
protect you and your mother doesn't stand up to him but  
does as she is told and Alan Turchin the child rapist  
at 1504 Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn New York  
Alan Turchin the son of the superintendent

takes me by the arm and pulls me toward the basement again  
 and my brother Michael takes my other arm and they  
 tug-of-war me in the bright daylight and I long to break  
 into two pieces one could die and go with Alan Turchin and  
 one could live and stay with Michael and I don't break into  
 two pieces but it's bright daylight and Alan Turchin  
 gives up but I live there for two more years and I stand  
 in the courtyard mouse hedgehog rabbit toad  
 and every other small animal that ever longed  
 for a dark safe hole to hide in but the only hole  
 to hide in is the basement and I can't go upstairs I've  
 been told to go out and play so there's no refuge and  
 no play there's just watching him carefully and hoping  
 he won't and after giving up at tug-of-war he  
 doesn't and he doesn't say anything to me about what  
 he did and he doesn't tell the children in the courtyard  
 about it but what he does is he divides me  
 out dry dusty chaff from kernels of wheat rind  
 from fruit used goods from new and mocks me  
 over and over and over always in front of an audience  
 of children and he beats me with words  
 for two years and I am  
 a leper  
 and I am hurt and puzzled and scared and  
 alone more than anything I am alone and my name is  
 Libby not Jenny and this happened to me



15.

I roll my eyeballs back into my head  
and look down inside  
my body and see a steel box around my heart and I hot  
my eyeballs up and superman-stare it and stare  
and stare and stare and focus and the box drips a little  
at the corners and begins to melt away off in a corner  
an image lights up and I look and it is  
a tiny heart racing away away away beating  
like crazy scared as shit and it's out of my body  
racing away it's hanging in the air a mobile  
without wires a creature from outer space  
and I inhale deeply and roll my eyeballs outward  
toward the heart and I inhale deeply and attach my gaze  
like a magnet to the tiny heart and I reel it in like  
a fish my gaze-hook in its folds and the little hook-hole  
a bleeding mouth and my eyeballs feel the pulse pulse  
of the tiny heart and I reel it in rolling my pupils  
upward with each turn of the reel then down then up again  
and I inhale deeply and it comes to me slowly and slowly  
and slowly but it comes and I inhale deeply and here  
it is and I open my kind adult-woman mouth and take  
the tiny heart into it curling my tongue around it  
gently and roll it back toward my throat and I inhale  
deeply and the heart goes down with the breath and  
I swallow and it goes down my throat gently like  
a peeled plum it goes down home back to the place  
it ran away from back now because it's safe I promise  
it's safe now I promise, Libby,  
I promise