

She's Butoh (ELECTRIC DELIRIUM 1.4)

by Jamie Grefe

Overcome by the obscene gropes of these habits, I long to drink from the well of silence. I'm playing a person in this theater of appearances: the unending jitters, tremors, thumps, palpitations, kicks, yelps, blinks. Word-trails fade, lay weary bodies in the graves of human thought. He was once alive, a bundle of chemicals. Now, our perennial confusion.

The receiver is a bundled wreck, a titan of habitual spits and guffaws, a flood approaching the valley with intent to destroy itself. And, Rosalind speaks in a sign language like a blind ghost, flailing lips and legs, tongue slit open to the wind. She has learned to speak in a beautiful way: choice diction, eloquent words to birth her world in a soup. She writes them down, chops.

A snapshot of Rosea is jammed in the pages of a discarded library book, the same one you bought, looking out the slatted bay window on Fever Hill, the way the Aquinas girls sat spread in shorts on the porch, lime mixers and summer sweat, until the goth above knocked drunk and pale, invited you in to feed her fish. An irksome moment. Her fish would eat you alive. Make-up like cake. A cringe. In white gown, pale face. You remember her three names: Rose or Rosemary or Rosaline.

The ceiling fan spins, ticks, the nurse above steps. She is seven stories tall. In dripping pink. You are waiting for light to disappear. The drive across the desert road was a deathly heat, the sun's gloom, a blaze. Homeless in a cement stall. For at that time, this present memory was an unimaginable pit, a horizon, fuzzy and full of longing. Long like a mind. (Whose fault is that? Is it not your own?)

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How have you managed to survive leaping through every window in every house you've ever lived in? How controllable are these flashes of unwinding?) Rosalind: the Polaroid, a snapshot on the dash, it obscured the speed, and there are no speed limits on certain highways. Drive packed to the hilt. Drive smoking. You drove for three days. One hundred miles per hour was not fast enough past mountains like brown puddles, fears left spattered in traces of Oregon, yellow ghosts aswirl under a Dakota moon. (Or, is it fear of death in Montana? Or, is it fear of God? Or, is it fear of the world outside Wyoming? Or, is it fear of love in Minnesota?)

Rosaline thinks a most awful thought, shutting the book, tearing the image, severing a homage to Man Ray. The tears of a ripped present.

Tell me about when you were an adult. Tell me about the bar and the Buddhist monk. Tell me about the way her real voice in Shinjuku. Tell me about belly slits and Nigerian men. Speak of drugs. Tell me about how you think I think you are when there are twenty three of us in the room together. Tell me about your son or daughter. The world is lovely.

She overcomes herself on the day of the spectacle, clown paint, unmoving amid a rumble of trains and screens, video logs and snapshots, live blogs from phones wet with lotion. This is Tokyo. Facial masks. Bare flaking paint in streams. Stardust. (Was that cabaret where your studies began, there on that sofa, in the dark of the white house?) It took days for the dance to end. Her preparation is a list: blossoming bud, wilt, grey, autumn, factory, smoke, dirt, snake, decay, rot, trash, ground, smear, bug, flutter, rose, love, crash, love, led, quaint in the comedown. Turn over. Watch her as she moves slowly. Slug, you almost can't see anything. You have no eyes. It's thickening, swine. Always and hereafter. Forever after. Move your arm, slow like so. Slow. It's a branch. It's alive. It's moving. There's a wind. It's a living branch.

