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## Haunting this Garden

Anna B. Thomas  
*Western Washington University*

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Haunting  
this  
Garden

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Anna Thomas



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# Endosymbiosis

Trust me to  
cross your morning skin like a solar flare's oily shadow  
and know I have wanted to heat you  
from the stomach outward ever since those old love  
stories built me round the desire to live within,  
woven nerve close, so that now I cannot rest until  
my heart beats heavy inside your rib cage,  
some furry, burrowed creature in fitful  
hibernation which, yes, might be rearranging the tetris  
tiling of your organs, pressing your lungs against your  
spine until it claims that last gasp, but which promises to  
leave you holey if you take it out, so, maybe  
instead, when you finish clawing at the  
hollowness of your pink pumpkin chest, hold me there,  
tie me back in with your green ribbon, feed me the  
plums and cereals of your breakfast, let me grow  
into your clothes and spoon the spongy marrow  
out from your bones for me to swallow and to take its  
place as the wire that will hold you, articulated,  
squatting, long after the rest of you has fallen to  
the museum floor in wet, mossy clumps, leaving  
behind only skeleton and metal, organized for the final  
viewing, the last memory, of those who knew  
us

# April

April  
rolls off my tongue,  
                  a fern  
                  fiddlehead  
                  un furling,  
sways in lime grasses,  
                  pink patch  
skies       crack       over  
                                  forget- me-  
                  nots bloom  
                                  under  
                  the dogwood's lichen licked bark,

April               cracks               open wide,  
                  edges eggshell thin  
poppy-yellow yolk  
                                  runs  
                                  messy  
                                  over  
dates fed in handfuls to cautious crows  
                  carrying powder blue  
                  warmth  
                  under their  
grease-gloss wings they  
                                  fly  
                                          off  
                  to chew cherries

April green grape

p O p s

in my mouth, spitting out  
honeysuckle petals,  
look at the stems and watch  
the aphids, full of their  
daughters and  
granddaughters and  
great great great  
granddaughters,  
march across into

May





# They say you cannot see color in the dark

Your sixth-grade camp crush is  
belly to brine-wood on the dock.  
You watch the sinew  
of his child arm pulled  
archery tight as he waves  
his stale sunscreen hands in  
minty bioluminescence.

This night is black and white cinema,  
mute backdrop blind shadows—  
sleeping bags  
dry-rustling in clouds  
of red  
smelling cedar dust  
cabin must  
and then before the milk-  
light comes:

the hot twang and  
sting of adolescent-  
flung rubber-bands  
whizzing over leaf-litter  
towards the tenderness of your leg;

the pink-scorch of  
    Kool-Aid powder  
dumped  
    between brace-buckled teeth and  
    called stardust  
by giggling counselors;

    the lukewarm splash  
of laughing raccoons  
ankle-  
shallow  
in the kiddie-pool  
    leather hands  
    dancing in the chlorine;

the citrus-dipped  
    bell honks of  
    Canada geese  
    cruising along  
    the shore outside  
    your cabin breathing  
in the last drops  
of dew-air;

and  
on the last night  
the air honey-thick  
a half-assed science lesson  
    about eyes  
    rods and cones  
    and light  
    and  
    as you catch  
    the last smoky  
songs of twilight  
they tell you  
you cannot see  
    color  
    in the  
dark.

# Sometimes Eelgrass Reminds Me of Snakes

cling to my scalp like  
clumps of sea-bathed eelgrass on  
rocky shores, dry to  
first touch but

sponge-soaked when I work my fingers  
inside the knot and  
uncurl something  
still living

in there, breathing  
in salt air becoming  
sheet-thin and bone-sharp like  
the shells that used to

cut        feet until  
I carried        and bled onto the tongue  
of the water, lapping till  
it stained my toes blue

and I scrambled  
up the bank as fast as  
I tried to drop        when it was over  
but when I try to turn

      into namelessness  
      become  
all the empty  
all that space in the passenger seat and

all the still air around my face and when  
I find a bare space  
I see right there  
ready for me to run

the flank of my  
crayon along  
ribs to reveal  
there like a watermark on

every breath I take because  
lie  
in wait in every footprint  
I have yet to make and

hide under the barnacled  
rocks that my feet will overturn and  
live under my skin,  
ready to grow

green with my hair until  
cling to my scalp like  
clumps of beached eelgrass on  
sunburnt shores



# Herald,

Would you promise  
her again:  
to look after me (once her girl);  
to look after the city,  
the seaside town,  
in its brick and mortar gloom?

Will you promise me,  
if I go,  
these little, difficult things:  
to help the crows watch for fallen bagels;  
to hold all the rain and seagull shit you can;  
to keep the light on for us both?

I promise you this:  
the night here does not fall  
but for you to belch out your  
six toothed grin. You've lit  
your red letters in each  
of my bedrooms.

With love,  
Anna



# Doomsday

McLaughlin says  
when the Big One hits/ the Arb  
will swallow/ all of campus//  
Everything will go  
down/hill after this//  
Bad/ luck cannot be fought  
off with hands/ words//  
Maybe  
I don't want to die/ a martyr//  
Maybe  
I don't want to live/ life to the fullest//  
The people I sit next to in class don't/ act/ually want  
to talk about that//

The papers say  
COVID is on the rise again//  
Sometimes  
I think the disasters started  
with you/ leaving//  
Sometimes  
I think you leav/ing is proof of  
my own catastrophicness//  
You won't come/ back  
even when I fall ill//  
I know that  
one is true//  
I say that one to/ psych-out the universe//

Scientists say  
the melt/ing  
arctic will re/lease new diseases//  
This is not actually  
the worst of it//  
Some toxic gases are  
invisible/ odorless//  
Some sick/nesses cling  
to your body  
for as long as it breathes//  
Sometimes  
there is no cause of death//  
The bad can die/ young, too//

The weather/man says  
the flooding will only get worse//  
In later years  
it will hit  
close/r to home//  
Kirkland/  
Costco will drown//  
My parents will die  
even/ if this does not happen//  
My parents will find  
I'll never make these  
22 years/ worthwhile//  
There is nothing in my heart/ besides fear//

Emma says I will get better but  
My bad/ habits are  
the ones I'm proudest of//  
Being a bad/ driver  
because I'm gay  
will have consequences  
someday//  
I will feed someone  
the brown/  
ing orange/  
I am afraid/  
to eat//  
I have a mean/  
streak/  
I don't  
know  
how to  
br  
eak//

I know  
I k/now  
I know  
I  
will  
be  
the  
death/  
of  
thou/sands//

# In which my shame is a haunted house

This must be the place—

Pears swinging low outside the windows  
Fig wasps dying in threes on the sills

Trying to escape the buzz of heat—

Where you will find me  
All torn fingernails

All grinding teeth in the night

All pee-in-a-cup dirty but  
I've dumped sugar on the cranberries

You'll find gilded sheets on the walls

And the trashcan full of sidewalk plastic  
I picked up with dusty fingers

This must be the place—

Hydrangeas bruised blue by my arm's arc  
Walk lined with crushed china plates

Paint peeling under the windows—

Where you will find the words  
I scrawled across the floorboards

The vows I crushed my toes into

The dust—it's mostly skin cells—  
Left behind in the pen furrows

But you'll find the list I left by the door  
And it will call for honey, chamomile,  
Tissues, bandages,

365 sheets of colored construction paper  
To make 365 birthday cards  
For my friends

This must be the place  
Where you'll find me  
On my knees

Wet-chinned  
Moaning  
Before every mirror

Every  
Skin cell  
Simmering

But then you'll see me  
In the bed  
In the attic

Holding all the dust I have shed  
Saying thank you  
Thank you

This must be the place

