

POSTPOP

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Translated by Erin Goodman

Exquisite

you wait for night
to fall to kneel at the edge of your bed
and you cross your hands to ask
sweet Jesus for everything to be over,
and you promise to be good,
to finish all your chores,
to respect your elders,
to eat all of your food,
you swear you'll never say a bad word
and never fight with your little brother,
all of it, all of it while you say the lord's prayer,
three hail mary's and you
say an act of contrition
until mama opens the door
and asks: where's the body

1993

At dawn we were awoken by a roar.
The windows exploded. Glass scattered.
I went down to get grandmother. She was sleeping. She was deaf.
Grandma, get up, something's happening.
What if this is the end of the world, I thought.
Mama told me, *don't walk around barefoot.*
I preferred not to listen to her.
I ran to the door. I went out to the street.
The neighbors in their pajamas, I
 wore a nightgown,
 the sky, violet.
It's the end of the worrrld! - screamed grandmother.
I was thirteen years old, a virgin, and
I didn't believe in God. I ran to put on pants.
I went back to the street. We were all looking at the purple sky.
The earth was still shaking. The smoke
overtook my lungs, I could barely breathe.
Mama, is it the end of the world? asks my brother
dragging a backpack full of little toy soldiers.
Mama kneeling on the floor, saying:
Through my fault, through my fault, through my own grievous fault.
The police sirens, the crossfire.
Screams.
Mama standing up hugging my grandmother.
My brother standing up hugging my mother.
Take one.
I can't stand up, and my arms
aren't enough to hug myself.
Take two.
I ran to the corner of the house, fifty meters,
 there was no more corner,
my bloody feet.

Out of focus.

The Lair

I awake
with the taste of a cold coffee
I insist on hugging the pillow
missing some body,
tangled in the sheets
sublimating my sex,
I get up
with the creaking of the wood
each squeak banishing
the longing for an other
then, behind the bars of the gate
I begin to weave.

Postpop

he was sitting next to me without saying a word
my hand stretched over his knee
my hand cutting into his flesh
he looks out the car window
outside
far
far
he, little
me, little
far, outside
outside of myself
we've tried to hold our gazes
it's useless
he doesn't recognize me in the caress
I don't understand the code
I don't understand anything
he takes my hand and puts it aside
far from his leg
far from his flesh
I hate the distance
I hate the feeling of being far away, when he's so close
and so inside
that he rips me apart
penetrates, hurts
I can't contain myself and a fucking tear slides
down my face
I don't have cheeks anymore, I've lost fifteen kilos
then, the smooth tear
falls, wets me
before the tear used to circle my face, it got lost
now it falls
it exposes me
he doesn't ask me what's wrong
I'm waiting for him to ask me what's wrong, so I can tell him
that I don't know why he is acting so distant
but he doesn't ask
and I cry
in silence
like in the movies
I cry with the whimpers drowning in my trachea
and a little voice, a small thread of a voice
fragile, contained
asks him what's wrong
and he doesn't answer,

absorbed in an non-existent landscape
with his eyes on his own reflection
because the glass reflects, only his gaze
and him, lost in his own eyes
my hand, timid, searches for his leg again and strokes it
my hand doesn't understand the silences
my lips don't either, and they kiss him
then he looks at me
and I can see my eyes in his eyes
my eyes full of tears in his eyes
but he doesn't cry
he just looks at me and doesn't say anything
I want to tell him what I feel,
but I can't, my trachea won't let me
he just looks at me, with my eyes full of tears
because now his eyes carry my eyes
and I tell him that's enough, don't look at me like that
don't do this to me, please I beg him
then, he stops looking at me
and a tear spills from his right eye
absorbed, I babble something that not even I understand
I've sold you, he tells me
I gave your name, he tells me
they're coming for you, he tells me
I want to close my eyes
and start over
he's sitting next to me
my hand stretched over his knee
my hand cutting into his flesh
he looks out the car window
he turns
he looks at me
close
close
we hold our gazes
and our bodies
fall into each other.

Masking Tape

I've gone out to the street. I don't recognize the shapes,
my eyes have insisted on desubjectifying
the known. I try to see my reflection in the
only glass door that's still intact on
this street, and suddenly I find myself with
my face aged and distorted. I try making an expression
with my lips, something that comes close to a smile
but my eyes settle on my eyes and I can see it.
My eyes hate me and they won't stop looking at
my own eyes, which are witnesses to the terror.
Now, the images come one after the other,
unstoppable. I want to look away, but everything
blurs in the reflection on the glass door crossed
with masking tape from corner to corner. A big X,
a big negation. This door, this fucking glass door,
unmasking images that I don't want to see.
Everything is repeated over and over,
over and over, everything repeats itself. And I can no longer distinguish
the beginning from the end, because everything becomes
the same. Everything is the unit of terror reflected in
a glass door that didn't explode, and even if I
walk away from it, it will still go on reflecting everything
over and over, over and over everything. I want
to go back to the place I came from, but I can't find another door.
The song that I used to sing as a girl when
I was afraid, comes meekly from my mouth, I hum it
without stopping, fast, fast, all the while
faster, so that no other thought has space,
until I am breathless and I feel my heart
about to explode. I start to cry, I see it
reflected in the glass door. I've become
a fragile animal, unknown.
*Mauro told me a happy memory is something that
appears in my head and instead of letting it go
I hold on to it for a while and remember it again. I live it
again and it makes me smile.*
I just want to forget everything, to become human larva.

Steps for a democracy

Step 1:

Take masking tape and cross your window, with a big X from corner to corner.

Step 2:

Buy candles, matches and keep the door locked. If possible do not leave your house.

Step 3:

When traveling by bus, always try to change your itinerary on the way home.

When traveling by car, do not slow down.

Step 4:

Be aware if a suspicious person is following you.

Always look around you when walking, and glance behind you.

If you sense the presence of a stranger, go towards the closest door and pretend to ring the bell.

Step 5:

Don't be distracted with your handbag on your shoulder, wear it across your body.

Always wear it across your body, remember: wear it across.

Step 6:

Check your car before getting inside, it's preferable to have a mirror to make sure that there is nothing strange stuck to the undercarriage of the car.

Step 7:

If you find a suspicious package on the street, don't approach it.

Call the police.

Step 8:

If a stranger knocks on your door, do not answer.

Call the police.

Step 9:

If you sense that you are being observed by strangers, call the police.

Step 10:

Put up a gate at your house.

Step 11:

Put bars on your window.

Step 12:

Buy booby traps and alarms for your car.

Step 13:

Put up an electric fence.

Step 14:

Remember: we live in a safe city.

Step 15:

Don't talk to strangers.

Step 16:

Don't give out your personal information.

Step 17:

Don't leave your children unattended.

Step 18:

Don't let your children play in the street.

Step 19:

Don't go out.

Step 20:

Above all remain calm.

Bonus Track
The absence of Lucky

Strike 1

The music starts to go down
the bodies agitated from dancing
return to the paraphernalia
of the dressing room: jackets, purses and
quick goodbyes. It was a pleasure to dance
with you, thank you for the invitation, the food
was delicious, a marvelous dinner,
what a great party. Everyone becomes
Cinderella, when the city lights start to disappear in
Lima's fog, and the police sirens
announce that their movie has just begun.

Strike 2

Mother puts a handkerchief on my face
don't breathe, she says, duck your head,
she says. Mother asks owner of a clothing
store to let us in. Owner is terrified
by the tanks that are getting closer, she's fearless.
Mother takes me roughly by the arm and drags me
to store of fearless owner. Owner rushes clients
to help her pull down the shades. Mother
asks for some water, moistens the handkerchief and flings it
at my face. Owner looks at a slit and
starts to bitch. The tanks have left.
Mother and I walk the center of history.

Strike 3

Residues from a long night, cigarette
butts, cups overflowing with sips that
didn't find throats that could resist them,
impeccably empty bottles, bodies
strewn on carpets, chairs and someone's beds.
It's six o'clock in the morning and the arms start to
stir along accompanied by the dizziness. PLAY
and a cassette tape starts to spin again.
The cousins' party has come to an end.