



((RELENT))

What Kim looks like under television buildings is so very pretty. Tall, narrow, slightly dimpled and curved in profile. Grabbing him and running beneath airplanes teenagers. Burning and jet fuel need no childhoods, they were birthed directly from time.

Wrestling with alternate futures.

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A leaf to the twig in light wheezes, and retreats into roots to grow scabs where it had joints. The scar forms where a new branch grows. We shed the details every winter, hide beneath ground, humans under the sun. Is anything so important we would shed our bodies? Our time is a thief, only a gift to think there is no end. In this city, everyone makes memories to blanket the ground. Always the hope we not be in the tower that falls but standing in crown of the newest. Always watched.

How many years could that take from you? How many years for what you want now? Would a thief settle your first steps in a paper box and escape on the number one train, the ground to dissolve beneath his feet? Your short order could flutter in so many little pieces.

You would scabble to save it.

You would put what you had to it.

This girl insists her future was swiped by crows. She contends it was taken by one of the many thieves that are time. Shreds, like leaves, repetitious melodies, like leaves, shocked from the stem by a winter that came a thief who folded them with blurry hands and captured all the patty cakes and songs into his bag, grabbed the number one train and left her empty. Moonlight escaped from his mouth and eyes. The ground dissolved under his feet. Memory drained into the roots and hardened.

She believes the air expanded and chimneys puffed to fill another set of lungs, which she presented, howling; contends that the subway shivered when she arrived a new passenger, and that she can swing from the Empire State. She will answer after a struggle because she will, on her way, climb every tower. The ancient stainless twins Empire and Chrysler bow slightly to the Freedom

Tower growing downtown visibly. She has acquired the habit of climbing them. She does not distinguish between heroes and the bustle in streets below. The city does not require.

What this new immigrant left behind still lives in a home town. That would be her first set of steps, a piano, a greasy sports car, a father who was a god. These things all seem trees rooted in another country. The futures of that place: she shocked from the stem. These items are the seeds of meaning which the earth is, the young woman she is now.

What was that? Mother left the the door open when she left, wrapped in an Hermes scarf carrying two bags suggesting. Behind her sunglasses she demanded they iron father's work shirts, but not before putting out her cigarette. Kim and her twin, Emily, who listens.

Her mother is not there. She is likely browning under the sun in Acupolco. She wears Acupolco sunglasses and eases into erotic vibration sports cars. Maybe she is a blinded crone hitching a threadbare sundress making wind somewhere. Mother left the door swinging, wrapped in an Hermes scarf carrying two bags suggesting exotic. Behind her sunglasses, she demanded Kim finish ironing their father's work shirts, put out her cigarette, and left to pursue another future. The thief who held her hand, stepping from the curb, was boredom with a watch. Kim and Emily watched.

This is the seed of meaning which is the earth that is the young woman she is now, and it would not slow a thief. It consists of shreds like leaves and repetitious melodies shocked from the stem by a winter that came a thief who folded them with blurry hands and captured all the patty cakes and songs into his bag and left her empty. Moonlight escaped from his mouth and eyes. The ground dissolved under his feet. A supernatural being in Kim's world. It is the crowded faces shunting and routes that do not lead. She contends subways shiver like sparrows under each new pretty dream, but they are not the trains she chose.

So always in her mind are these first steps, which she insists were directed toward a golden path. Hold the twig tightly. Doubt the new season will come. She has brown eyes.

She has other items this morning. Thin grey twigs snap beneath air, she steps athletic, sharp elbows on Broadway to hail a cab. A delicate rise of cheekbones and sun conflict, the car leaps with a jangle of coins and vinyl mats - reek, of exhaust tar, with haste, northward. She attaches to the phone and says to him, fuck,

I don't know. Where will I be? In the streets filled with glass. Here's what I suggest: get yourself a plane ticket and crash in the Yunnan. Boyfriend is woolly grease whose brain clicks like a set of teeth. She realizes her lack of faith caused someone important to lose faith in her. He is too slow to run behind a cab. After a few Central Parks a tunnel presents freedom, and Kim wonders, maybe life as a trapeze artist was a better poem than this one, saved by a dead cell phone battery. A wise bit of advice she has followed, not giving him a key. Central Park tunnel granites to Amsterdam street and tires.

Exhausting sleep of airplanes, not sleep but hypoxia, and the endless time zones of the country backhand her. Chatter roils from those seats consisting of thought this recently and felt that ago, LCD screens, aluminum smiles, and back to her apartment after burning her clothes in the foyer. There is a smell to airplanes that belongs to the light in which they fry. It clings. She realizes the anger she indulged was directed at something important to her.

That girl rises with the east coast and sleeps with west. Attached to the cell, Kim tells how the rock star mattered, and how she always felt he might just bite her and crunch the dinner plates in his ambitious teeth.

Kim dreams beneath airplanes. Jet liners whine and muscle her neck. She considers his posture thrusting. She realizes anger was directed. She is glad he is gone and glad she sent him there. Coffee morning breaks into crystals in her mortar, draws attention from starlings. They burst from Riverside Park. Atlantic light has an orange cast this morning.

To be precise, it was time that mattered to her. The return of every morning.

After the moon shifted higher that evening, she measured her paces to midtown and climbed the Empire State building. Icy wind greased fuel tanks and Emily came along.

In the clanking elevator rattle hardhat to the spiky beams mercury vapor there he is too, Gamele, who only looks out to the Atlantic, who sniffs the air for his little prizes. He has always followed her, packing every cast off thought, piece of clothing, broken teacup. He is a murder of crows, he is simple time, he is a they. He has two faces, two sides, two smiles. One smile is for Kim, the other for Emily. He loves her very much but also not at all.

On a stainless ledge Kim attached to the cell phone and said, you know, from here, the statue is definitely thrusting herself into the harbor. She said, if I were to lean out just so, I could touch

dirigibles in the sky, in which it is impossible to be handcuffed by the police and led back to the ground. She can hear the pancaking floors of those older towers and smell the limey dust of every exploding file cabinet.

There is time to climb the building again tonight. A sensible girl does not jump, she aims the camera and sends the photo to her email and others. She will grind the coffee more tightly this morning, in the smaller of her mortars, and draw the attention of a hawk.

She could be overwhelmed by the scale of everything but it is not her method or her faith. The city has never towered over. She needs to move quickly. She needs to pass rooms of domestic perfection. It is a massive dream of fame that shakes her like a flag.

What was that path? Mother left the door open when she left, wrapped in an Hermes scarf carrying two bags suggesting. Behind her sunglasses she demanded Kim iron father's work shirts.

Consequently, Kim bore to New York City a confusion of bones and teacups and like everyone, sleeps on the floor and kicks. She wonders why her bed is stuck in a FedEx station in the Bronx, why a man with a walker throbs across the floor above because he cannot sleep. We all wonder why our bed is stuck in a FedEx station. Care about peace and bathtubs. Care about having a home and the order of the china cabinet. Classify every note on each little paper to message to their future woman because these Hermes scarfs matter. Kim realizes that the woman she rushed ahead of in today's sidewalk bustle was her younger self.

Feeling like Batman, she counts her steps to midtown and climbs the Empire State building again tonight. Attached to the cell she says what? But gravity boxes and rivets fill the air like cab stations up the Huron. We are all temporary in direction, we drive beneath towers. Warmth is a blessing. She says to herself, you've paid with another piece of time. With the coming of the sun she could sprout into a new light but just now, she has iron bones. See, the turning inside belongs to no desire but her own careful view.

Another morning lights. Paddle steamers throw bearings in the Hudson and Staten Island sinks insane bus stop poverty. Machines are taken by anxiety: crews must be chosen, amateurs race them in splintered paddle wheels. You had best hope, she tells Emily, that the boat doesn't go ablaze, because they won't dock it where there's a fee, and you will cruise the East River aflame like hell's own child. Glorious sun lights, and falls. Meet me there, she

tells Emily.

That night, jumping a sparrow's dive and flicking her carbon fiber cape, she landed cleanly in Times Square night of television buildings, a perfect surprise.

Time did not matter so much. It could be seen that the old stainless towers bent so slightly under the weight. The Freedom Tower added six new floors in the night over the television buildings, only ads for the sense of smell, taste, the eyes, ears, legs, muscles and blatant motorcycles screaming up the parkway.

Time says, you seem a little distracted. Are you concerned? Coffee? Red Bull? I've got an invoice, it's a leaf to your twig, a retreat into roots. Shed the details, hide beneath ground you know. How many years may I take? Let's settle your first steps in a paper box, escape on the number one train.

This morning crept along the river and failed to light. Connected to her phone, Kim called space to ask, where was she? Tea stained eggs and the wind off the Hudson pulled her drapes into Atlantic rain. How does time sit at the breakfast table? Calmly it sits to sip its coffee. We're friends, you and me, it says, birds of a feather we run from the same hawks don't we, pass the fig jam won't you?

She's forming a plan now. A different plan is forming for a different person. If you have already jumped the first time, what does the second jump mean? There's less to leave behind. A very intense state of mind.

I can relent, Kim says into a dead cell phone battery. Above her head, the space shuttle arcs for entry and dives like a falcon for western states.

Kim demands on the phone that she get there. Careful sister Emily has no verb. Where? Someplace high over it. They sit on the Empire State and throw a beacon, the thief jumps to their older building unseen, because beneath the Hudson there is one door to enter, which is through a barge, to the storehouse beneath the river. That's the door he's willing to offer them. Gamele is willing, up high over the water with them. He says it's an easy run to the warehouse beneath the Hudson. Here is how: you will lose your sister. Here are the directions.

That night, sky watches fog. Wind hammers. Where the Thief rests, chills the hard Atlantic. How many flights over Atlantic City are enough? A jet circles Times Square to watch TV. Freedom tower rises already over the Empire and Chrysler. You cannot sleep

anywhere near it. Thief sits there, Gamele the thief, Gamele the twin. He has two faces, two sides, two smiles, as many faces. He is the one with the most special gift: he can steal time and thereby offer relief from this world, the gift of being able to live inside your dreams. He smells on this Kim a chance to present that gift, he can smell it across midtown. Icebergs slip down the East River to smuggle themselves up the coast.

Kim is there. Quiet sound of ice brushing shoulders between them. He's up there, see?

Careful Kim has no verb. Where? Someplace high over it, says Kim. Someplace over it, precisely: Holland tunnel shit entry, Parkway superbikes, the city's limey shell. She sits on the Empire State and throws a beacon, the thief jumps unseen, because beneath the Hudson there is one door to enter, which is through a barge, to the storehouse beneath the river. That is the door he is willing to offer. Gamele is willing, up high over the water with her. He says it's an easy run to the warehouse beneath the Hudson. Here are pretty dresses. Here is how, here are the directions.

There it is, a gentle, soft hare with large brown eyes: her sister's life. Do you want it? Gamele asks again, do you want it?

Yes I do, she says. It's not mine to give you, says Gamele, it's only yours to take. Will she know, asks Kim? Yes, says Gamele, she will. But only for a moment.

How do you swallow your past probably bitter and good? Get up high to see the Freedom Tower added six floors today when the sun was grinding and tonight seaboard wind chills. Kim considers to eat her shadow conferring on the cell. Chrysler tower watch televising Times Square. This is the pivot ruthless ambition still, bow to the tip of Manhattan. Kim hero, burrows into the wine cellar beneath the Brooklyn Bridge.

Again, the sun rises. A day time walked the city and disappeared beneath the streets. Kim wrapped herself in ivy and bare feet and came to the Hudson with the directions which said jump in the water, jump in the water twice. Cold Hudson water for the first jump, the release of air from her lungs is a pitiful fizz and she waits out the cold in her limbs until it becomes numbness, the invitation to the second jump: it is there beneath the barge surrounded by mines and submarines. It is a jump out of her pale body to eat river bottom, to count the stones on her back and lie still. Gamele the Thief is there to greet her beneath metallic river surface of mercury light vapor. Gamele can hold both of her hands

beneath the sentry barge in the Hudson and drag her like a cloud of Octopus ink into the space between the water and Lincoln Tunnel where he keeps his private warehouse of lives and he says aren't they pretty? Aren't they better than yours? Can I show you a pretty dress?

Yes you can, she says.

Iron shelves pounded from ships rise higher than Kim can see clearly. It seems they are incredibly deep. Every single square inch is packed. For a moment, Kim has the impression Gamele has cut through the earth itself, that she is seeing the dense strata of the city's own history, grimy with oil, chinked tightly with oyster shells. With no obvious source, it is strange with the light of shipwrecks and archangels.

But what he can show her will wash away her tears and dry her ivy dress, maybe even bring it into flower. Carefully shelved in Gamele's warehouse is every telephone number ever dialed, the spinning face of every watch abandoned in empty drawers, every drink that left a belly full of water and all of the hotel keys that make up a life. There is a room solely for little pewter deer.

Listen, he says, to feel again the way you felt, when you first saw your possible future, is overwhelming in its magnitude. Think of the moment - not a moment, but the moment - from which your dreams spring. There is no human life without one. Even the meanest existence buried in the cruelest circumstance has been lit by a spark of imagination and hope firing in the brain of a human. It welds, like an arc, the now to the possible, and bursts into the world like a little ball of gold.

And then the torrents start, of wind, water and change. Before long, one cannot distinguish it for certain from the other flickering lights on the ground, as the planet spins beneath our jet stream in dark of night. Every wave of time calcifies, a new layer.

Well, strip those off. You can have it, in the palm of your hand like a sparrow, that moment when you looked up and felt no death around you, only a vision of, what was it? Your first real steps?

Come here, he says, I have a special thing for you to see. Isn't that a better one? Let me show he says with his fingertips. Let me show you he says with his second smile. Let me show you, your first steps. These are the correct starting point for you, are they not? The starting point that leads to something so much better than now, do they not?

To be precise: that room is further down the Hudson, further back in time far enough to hear the screws of Vanderbilt's

ferries carrying Sunday visitors up river and cowering quietly beneath ancient leaves of the muckraking press that wheeze under feeble light of childrens' souls. There it is, a gentle, soft hare with large brown eyes: her first steps. Do you want it? Gamele asks again, do you want it?

It is a small package, a bento box, wrapped neatly in rice paper, that Kim tucks neatly and steals away on the number one train. Water dripped from her pretty feet to mark her path home and she slept with two hearts, two childhoods, four hands, a pure child of envy.

Yes I do, she says. It's not mine to give you, says Gamele, it's only yours to take. Will she know, asks Kim? Yes, says Gamele, she will. But only for a moment.

Listen to me: you can have this. But here's what I get: in a sense, everything you would have had, because I get to keep you. Gamele laughs. He says, it's how I've filled this wonderful place, and it's not a bad trade you know, consider it carefully but not with undue caution, lest you fail to realize just how special this deal is.

You seem so very dislocated up there in that big city. You're seeing faces you recognize on people you don't know, are you not?

It is a small package, a bento box, wrapped neatly in rice paper. Water dripped from her pretty feet to mark her path home and she could sleep with two hearts, two childhoods, four hands, a pure child of envy.

But the moment is different, though the amount of difference would not call the attention of a leaf, though it seems the rooftops are patrolled by matadors. Kim's bento box on the kitchen table carefully wrapped is there to be opened now. Open it, Kim, you want to eat what is in it. It seems the air shrinks around her, grows more dense. The air is heavy around her, shrunken by the gravity of need. The air around her fits into a small space. The floors are woolen blankets.

She stands by her table. In glow from other televisions she can just make the outline of her rice paper box. I will open it and eat now. I will open it but maybe not eat everything in it? She will open it and does unwrap it and there, in neat compartments, are all the birthday cakes and matching outfits. She eats relentlessly. She flies hypoxic airplanes through the night. Kim wonders, now too late, how the thief could have traded so many people for the things in this place.

Kim is out of register, a world of layers not quite rightly aligned. Kim is so heavy with doubleness she cannot quite say did it take four legs to walk? But two moons shine on her and she feels the strength of two hearts pumping her blood. This young woman wants so badly to be more than she is. It seems her rib cage rises above the city quickly. It seems her friends' numbers are no longer in her cell phone.

It was a breathless aluminum night of oysters from every coast tasting of Puget Sound, tasting of the hard Eastern seaboard, disgorging liquor of delicate saltwater. Ruthlessness found Marie Antoinette's champagne and poured it into her writhing belly button.

Gamele was right. To inhabit again the moment from which your own idea of the future springs is overwhelming, and Kim was filled with it. Emily slept, and found it impossible to wake.

Now even Gamele was happy. He snapped his fingers and they became jingling brass bells. You see? Today is so mundane, I'll shelve it, you start from your wonderful place, a fantastic trade! All of his work these many years would pay off beautifully with a new life for his warehouse full of them. Had he not put the time in? Had he not followed this Kim so carefully all those years, picking up the cast-offs? He already had everything she had not valued: every childhood bicycle, doll, lost friend, broken teacup, schoolbook and wad of chewing gum.

Seeing her chose to join all that again breaks his very heart with overpowering joy.

Life you imagine and this one you can flicker between one another. Light engulfs under Hudson over Empire State. Hey it is Springtime knocking! A glass wall presents itself to the end of possibility proscribed by past. Kim cannot step beyond that? Glass. She hit the rewind button.

I don't want it, she says, quite suddenly.

Gamele sees only white light. What do you mean? The sudden thought of loss shakes, he breaks into murder of crows and congeals hairier, somewhat bonier subliminally fast. With a glistening smile, he demands to know what Kim means.

What she means is that all these pasts seem slightly junky, don't they? The glow of their birth still clings, but, here they seem to be in their proper place, in the layers, compressed like an oyster midden.

So why is she down here in the roots? That question, finally, occurs to her. And once it has, then only the obvious could follow. She began to retreat for daylight, for the morning sun, for the crack of coffee crystals in her smallest mortar. She forms a plan. On the cell she says, Emily, be there.

By that night, icebergs slip down the East River to smuggle themselves up the coast. Kim is there. Emily is there. Quiet sound of ice brushing shoulders between them. How could you says Emily. There's no answer for that says Kim. Really? Do you feel empty, Kim wants to know, because I do, I do, forgive me and if you don't I can't breathe. The air is so thin now to breathe. He's up there, see? Top floor of the Freedom Tower. There is the thief squatting like a dragon. I have a plan, a proposal can you trust me for a moment trust me please come with me. Elevator rattle hardhat to the spiky beams mercury vapor there he is, hairy Gamele who only looks out to the Atlantic, who sniffs the air for his little prizes. Stainless ledge in her pretty dress Kim steps a little closer to draw the attention, to make the first jump again to catch his attention and she over into crystal night air looking into Emily's face for a moment of trust that the second jump can be made. Death doesn't mean anything to the lucky ones who have no more past in them.

She splashes back into the Hudson red as a turbine.

Twist time!

Gamele flashes into the moment to see his prize falling in front of him and jumps to catch it. Can a thief's heart break for his victim? It can when the booty is volunteered. You can have me says Kim, but you can't have the spidery threads that connect me to the one who truly loves me. You can have that childhood you wanted. I give it to you. Falling together, thief and victim are the same. I don't want it he says. I want you to have it. I want you to have it because there is no room in my warehouse for this, will you take it? From her perch above the city Kim can see. Gamele continues, as he must, to catch every thing Kim leaves behind.

RELENT

1

I asked you to drink the sun
And you held the twig tightly.
I asked you to jump with me
And you kissed the grounds.
You see a new life will come,
Why do you doubt the season?

Shed your body for me please,
We can shelter the winter
Buried under another year's dream.
Store the details in a bento box.
We humans under the sun
Can fold ourselves like rice paper.

Which years of the future remain,
Held tightly to your branches?
The wind shakes us like flags
And acts the thief to my desire.
There's no thing but scars to leave
Behind where fibers held us fast.

The wind in this city has taken mine
And see, I'm still here beating warm.
It escaped with mine on the subway,
Ground dissolved beneath its touch.
I did not scabble to save the things
It carried away with the order I lost.

I am asking you to feel another Spring
And to let your order fall away thinking
Of next year's new branches and twigs.
I am giving you the promise of ground
That will warm with the coming of sun
And sprout us whole into new light.

2

This girl has insistence
like a Catherine wheel
Spinning inside her cage
like a clockwork bird.
She retreats from demands.

The air with her pressures
against chimney puffs,
Expanding, fills her lungs
howling with struggle,
Because she will only hers.

She contends with subways
that shiver like sparrows
Under the mass of each new
rush and pretty dream.
It is not the train she chose,

This girl has iron bones
like the Empire State.
See, the turning inside
Belongs to no desire
But her own careful view.

She has the strength of will
to deny a city's push.
She has the crystal eyes
to see through crowds
Her map is a tattoo.

She will answer struggle
on her single way.
Do you envy that strength?

3

To be precise, the report:
Two songs, one first step,
A second hand dress and bow,
Piano of lessons learned,
Artifacts of a childhood
Placed with moons in orbit
Around the lovely flower
Of a pretty girl's youth,
But not well guarded
Because she thought them safe.
Hence taken with ease,
The seeds of meaning,
The earth of her woman,
Wouldn't slow a thief.

4

Shreds, like leaves, repeated melody
like leaves, shocked from the stem
by a winter came a thief folded them
with blurry hands and captured songs
into his bag, grabbed the number one
to train it north and leave me empty.

Moonlight escaped from his eyes on ground
dissolved under his feet drained into roots
hardened on the path of escaping ice
that grew into bergs and splintered gold.

5

Why do I stretch stones
Under my plodding bone steps
Into hopes
Where I can see coal
Black rooftop foot falls?
I live in cities of meat
Greased with tugboat oil
And ferries burp smoke.
I am a glassy dreamer.

There is this distance
Between people status driven
And the fatpants guzzling
That cries for heroes
Who understand birds
Need to cradle their souls
Somewhere lit by sun
And feathered with poems
That keep them warm.

6

New York likes heroes
Because every one burns
With a mad desire to fly
And when the lights flair
We lie on the ground
To eat spotlights whole
And flick our wings.
We don't settle for food.

We make shaky deals
Lit by hope of flight.
We cheer the trickster
Who runs with our past,
That outran the train.
For a sweet seduction,
Our childhood is sold
To an oiled huckster.

Therefore the price god
Ratchets dollars in hearts
And says even air
Needs to cost a soul
The most it can pay.

A unique eye glares
From hard rib fingernails
Stroking iron lungs
And lapping ice creams
To place a softened smile
On the friends we make
To welcome genius air
When we sense the will.

7

She grinds coffee more tightly
this morning, in the smallest mortar,
and draws attention of hawks.

Direction is temporary.
She lives beneath a tower shadow
Paying with pieces of time.

Under bright Times Square tickets,
This pale bento box heart sheds skin,
And again, the sun rises.

To walk the daytime city,
Suggesting new towers to fill it,
New file cabinets to eat.

Could she choose empty air over
Burning air? Jump twice, jump twice
To reach this morning's coffee.

8

What ambition looks like, under
Television buildings
Is so very pretty for me,
Like the gloss of jet fuel.
I will unwrap my lunch rightly here
And eat under the glow.
When you have left prior lifetimes
In favor of new light
Few things can be so sweetly whole.
Entwined with your lovely
Hudson River ferryboats air,
I arc cleanly in life.

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