

*the second encounter*

She's danger undefinable, indefatigable

Why don't you try her, chew up her soul, swallow her meat, spit out the rest, leave her bones and empty spaces? ~~Why don't you try?~~

I hear it wouldn't be your first time—or hers,

Yes, yes, I remember: she smelled blood in the air whenever you flew into the room, the scales crushed to dust beneath your black stiletto—and who's to say she was empty (?)

—when she looked at you

I heard her lungs expand;

fair warning:

she screamed for nights when you left her, and so she will sink her teeth into you—make you cry and scream, *scream and squirm* for years if you return (she says this into her mirror every night; I promised her I wasn't paying attention, but like this she's impossible to turn from)

I hear she's real glad you're gone, yet

She kissed a boy the other night, I watched her—as she tried to make you out of him (this would not have been too hard; he had your look—wide nose, dark mouth); as she stepped back, I caught the silence of her eyes, knew that if only your warm, black knuckles could lift up her chin

—my mother, she leveled a whole city block once—Oooo, the stares she earned like *viscera* on snow, teeth so sharp, she caught men and women like thunder recalls hearts to beat like lightning starts the mind running, run, rush, sprint away, away, flee, fly; go

then the quiet of her sleeping; I want you to believe me. You may not believe me, but she's lightning again,

~~without you~~ me

she's the time I ventured out into tall grass and felt the whisper of cool scales across my bare toes, and then—

Remember her smile? I don't see it much anymore—the slow way her tongue would spread her lips, flickering across and wetting her off-white teeth, and she'd smile so so wide at your fingers

intertwined with hers or your warm mouth at her cold ear or your feather-rumpled looks when she'd say something sharp after you said something clever or when she combed my hair each morning. Never smiled at a stranger, a friend, or even an enemy, but she'd smile at you. Remember how'd she *smile* at you?

And she's the way curses plummet outta someone scared half to shit, half to hell—and I want to say I inspire this in her, but, really,

she's become this after you—I can still hear that hissing laugh she'd make, every time I left her, you, and the room; I didn't take it personally. I wanted to take it personally. I tried to pretend I was glad to be alone—shit, shit, some nights I'd hear the sounds you two made—I'd *listen*

She's the final cough of smoke and held breath before the engine turns, and I, honest, I would spend the rest of my afternoons and sunrises with fingers to glass, if only (*if only*) to see the infinite *intimate* sky-line of her mouth turning or bending or spreading or snapping or, or.

—I hear, that you're doing fine; I'm glad my worry is unfounded and her apathy correct, of course.

Of course, now, she thinks much less of you (and of me); she measures her nights, y'know, I've watched her measure the nights, hear her mouth round the numbers, by exhales and measure her daylight by how often she has to re-do her ponytail or return a greeting. So in this short time, between you new and then you not and then you not here, she's gone off and become the wisest of us—this “forgiveness” trick half-balanced on her smooth nose, while her fingers twitch ~~into~~ fists.

Y'see—*damn*—I just wanted to remind you: *tell you*; she's dangerous—

moon-lighted-quick-toed-neat-bited-bait-armed-long-looked-steep-sold-hasty-grinned-strong-backed-posion-tongued-knife-teethed-sweet-eared-night-skinned-ready-and-deadly-only-one-glance-cut-deep-breathe-red *dangerous*. Careful,

I hear if you survive the first encounter, no snake will let you live for the third.

*the little knife*  
*after Vasko Popa*

was born from *agape*,  
the kind of love that need  
not apologize for the breach-  
ing: flesh, lightening, adamant, space &

the little knife

time and time again used by people who  
broke too easily, then tomorrow  
used by people too practiced in ruin

the little knife

nation-feller, had no hilt and no  
crossguard: for, beautifully,

the little knife

knew no loyalty.

*the forgers of the little knife*  
*after Vasko Popa*

fed her wind  
and bile and rats,  
hoping she would be  
tame.

fed her oblivion  
and blood and worms,  
hoping she would be  
happy.

fed her glass  
and starlight and stories,  
hoping she would be  
patient.

fed her dirt  
and thunder and stones,  
hoping she would be  
gentle.

fed her cold  
and distance and nerves,  
hoping she would be  
swift.

fed her viscera  
and vitriol and flames,  
hoping she would be  
kind.

fed her not-love  
and not-time and not-mercy,  
fearing she would become  
free.