IN AN INSTANT I BURNED THE HAIR

A Thesis

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YOUR FATHER AND THE AXE
They put me to bed then
a lushness lives here.
there is an and I am.

standing on a tongue

beneath me
gives,

rhythm of breath,
swaying.

behind me a wave.

behind me a tooth.

behind me a flesh tunnel full with roosters.

a caw, a caw
a cough, a feather
a spattering of me.
To bed then, a bed of fish
crisscrossed against each other.
Abated, the fish.

In my labored, in my salivary
slumber, a pinching finger
escapes my hand.

supple supple, the floor itself is so.
my father on the stone step. cork filled eyes. Zé-kissed and gone. the stone step, the watcher.
the skinned baby flees itself then.
an even trade, my face a bargaining chip redness. Zé wants an eyebrow for his troubles. he floats it in a glass given him by a silken hand protruding elegant from a blackened, cooked body. the only appendage untouched. Zé saves the palm for last as it tastes the best and makes a fair cup holder. he wears a hat of feathers and the scalps of some others. stirs the liquid. eyes swell, swivel, veins burst.
dark hair, wind it, wind it, pundit.

It is yours only to Zê pull.

(Aonde vais)

grab my most lusophonic organ.

shudder, scratch down, down.

(caminhante)

cast me stringfed. call me puppet.

i saw that pillar of skulls

(accelerado?)

stacked in evora. you saw me

dangling from that chain.
my head drips straight up,
stain suspended droplets.

the surge of the mother
across my left eye not removed.

the mother dripping straight down.
the mother face open still.

pooling to liquid beige on
a floor of horsehair and eyelashes.

beaks, one sequin near just the nostril
black hole. a nostril with her tooth in it.

the mouth on the floor opens.
the upper lip incomplete,

the sound amorphous vowel.
the crag of the mother’s lip mutters.

my head points as grown
in a funnel. a turret of white scalp

black hair infected with roosters.
what climbs my head leaves tracks.
it begins as a tiny pea seething under my skin & etches thin lines a burning collection
of lines & half-letters. the flesh around it burns dark matter black. a sprouting from
the inside out, feels as flowering along the way, feels as grizzled mass pit in my gut &
spikes jutting as fangs of liquid sharp. my scream is ultimate animal. i eat coal &
whole roosters. the pea, swarming, seething, broiling pea. the rooster with my lung in
its mouth. the coal grimacing. bearing its teeth. mitochondrial wailing. enzymes
shouting in latin. tiny coils of teeth wrap around me in strips, dig in all at once, my
bleeding comes in spires.
your memory works like a cuckoo. and when you are off Zê will holler from the other room GOSTO GOSTO. consider this and in your chamber a Zê voice.
we love your body
best watching it

(minha machadinha)

birth itself of
bowels of cow.

we can eat that
ground nice all.

(quem te pôs a mão)

throw us down your throat,
thrust us up your dark.

your sweetly infinite
cut up webs of hands

(sabendo que és minha)

qualified once per
finger split webbing

so many little tongues
so tongues the many.
your father and the axe.
the skinned baby on the ground, glistening and beastly pink
the mother’s face open, her cheeks chicken breast cutlets shining
the father grabs your hand and urges you up and out, guiding
your feet as you edge around that mass in the dust
your legs cling to the sides of the horse whose
teeth are bared and spotted with the brown paint, manes
what sweat from those sides of your legs, from that straddling
how you stick there, the peel of your skin away from that plastic
shrieks a din unreal to you.
from what house that stony father axe bringing. snow tracked into a blood carpet. the murmuring on the doorstep. muffled throat song and dragged down by the foot. a sleep weary stone bearing faceless body and its fingers slender length around my feet. the lying asked not to feel the spreading numb water. but the father laid down funereal and gutted, filled with so many lobsters and a hissing from beneath the fluttering eyelash. the smell of a cellar all earthy and sweet mold singing affixed to the night. a cosmic sputtering graveyard digging mud laden undertaker. ancient hands from above spasmodic dancing fingers a gesture. one of them a ladyfingered porcelain white disappeared as fast as.
INTO THE PIT A RUMBLING
have your fingers stretch just so, their angles. fingers ours now.
in the doorway we pin you to yourself. to yourself and to the wall. we leave our name in the copy and you our perpetual duplicator. a cloud in an absolutely straight line means nothing. your eyes blackened like the coal you’ve been eating means everything. we like to start olfactory. smell that openness, the nutty sebum and the burnt protein of your hair like an overcooked egg. the mother smells like a hand that’s touched an old zipper. the mother feels of curd and wire. you’ll smell nothing but us. us a baked eye.
your flesh flutters elegant spasmodic against the restraint. cold curves. mottled metal.
dust putties itself in your open lesion, smells as motor oil, smells as your foot
stamped in saturated ground. settles there, lives in a colony of dust. a drip from above
you into your eye held open by some other. floods into and down your cheek. a cone
wails from a tiny optic mouthnerve. floods into and feels first as a dull cramp. feels as
an insect pinch into the sweet resistant white of your eye. until the eye forgets itself,
falls out soft, demure. rolls to Zé’s pointed boot. he kicks it light. he laughs a little.
we are locking your knees. brittle plates and the skinmeal stretched top of them. you feel our bloat beneath your shirt, the bubbling. the streets are brown now, paved with the soft stones. a step is the clacking of horses, is the clank of spoon to plate. on either side a deeper brown, beiged stars. the pang of our step in you like a roar, not to come out. your voicebox with our little finger in it, with a twig in your lung punctured. behind you the closing of a door.
we run a little finger under the softness of your inner arm. it ripples like a small storm. another finger, many wrinkles. you intake your breath sharp. we force it back out. the point of our finger tracing your muscle. we edge a nail in and unfurl it like yarn. suck it through the mouths on the ends of our fingers. tongue it. in time we glutton all of it up. you are withered then. you are a bag of skin and hair then. the ends of the hair needles furrow deep.
a spiral staircase takes root in your foot. the staircase made of hard hair. spins around you. the hairs coil out like so many angry arms. the end of each hair is split ends bottomed by needle. each hair is tiny, burrows down into the exposed pores of your face. the staircase a chamber and you are inside. the staircase a breadbox and you are hungry and the meal.
once it has puttied it hardens like a mean scab. the father keeps a place open in the
dust house for you. the father keeps your scab in his hand. the father keeps your hair
in his pocket. pulls at the scalp. the dust house feast no one can eat. breads made from
the dust of lesions. yours opens like a winking eye, a pink, closes and puckers. there
are others in the dust house but the eye obscured all you have are voices. the crush of
mouth closing down on dusted bread, slight.
the finger pit. the caved out bottom, shuttered hole filled with brown fingers. the pit
the muttering dry rubbing. hushed. well of fingers and the bucket full with nails.
mother pink and claying. knuckle dragging scratch and the little blood trails. drawing
lines, our names. tapping fantasma rhythms. the well heaves. dull dancing dead
fingers. the patting. the parting. finger from nail. we pull each and into the bucket.
a horse’s eye rolling manic. the shock of white amid that brown striped red. the blurred black line become you. the boundary between eye and white. you are asked to filet your own hand. draw your line vertical down your palm. lift your skin. your wrinkles fill. somewhere a palm reader mentions your line. lift it less tentative. the pink you see is your hand full of raw fish. smell it like you would your brother’s shoulder. your feet dig themselves further into the ground of lobster shell and splinter. edge along the little bones. do not splinter them. they will splinter themselves.
holds your hand like you hold the roosters.
this room grows upward. is a mountain. in a workshop he makes the mountain, Zé. the mountain made of steel sharpened out glistening stalactite. a foot grip in the pile of hacksaws. the blood loss hacking cough slice. scale the height of it. the spikes of it in your knees. the trickling there. at the top is the rooster and red crown. the breadcrumb it eats. the swarming prickled skin. constellated fire ants. holes driven. we climb in.
the mother’s mouth split in four and asks how your eyes have gotten so black. split in four and each quarter shining with the new foamblood. each of the four pitted, eroded by Zé with the dull scalpel. little fleshes plucked from the mother in a bowl on the horsehair floor. each of her inquiries is a word behind the one before it and halfway in the bowl. each of her quartered mouths like a wedge of citrus. stinging and acid bound.
the hanger room. the mother in the white dress. caked black at the bottom, the burn, the mud. in the corner. the corner’s metallic bite. the mother’s mouth sagging down. fingers curling to arm, white and bloated. the father enters on the one leg. the other on the ceiling. slashed open and dried now. the hat crooked, the hair congealed beneath it. the teeth missing. the lapsed smile half laughing bread mouth. around the mother’s finger.
the spurt from the corner. the forest where horsehair gives way to ground sewn
together from the mother’s clothes. your foot in the ditzy floral. the mother elsewhere,
naked. the forest and trees sooty and swollen full with liquid. the soot skin spread thin
over the carbuncle grey and too smooth trunks. the tree with that damage, infection
blustering and blistering. bark like shingles and skin tags. tie a string around it. wait
for the blood flow to freeze. watch it fall off then. the fallen nubs of dead tree skin.
the mother’s oversize sweaters.
forest and a figure in a tree. a wind picks up a leg, drags it. the foot stark beige from under the pant. the skin around the leg not the leg’s but a sewn case. the toenails dull, yellow. the casing smells of rubbed sage and the brother. the body’s nose is nowhere. the tree singing throatily. you remember this one. think playground. think pant leg. think the brother turned into a side dish. think the leaves swaying just a little.
forest and a clothesline between two trees. what billows on the clothesline is checkered. through thickest air you hear a faint muttering. sputtering Zé something. checkers on the breast pocket. the billfold. the brother. checkers catching wind shaking fat samba. a half luck half chance game of guessing the quilt. paternal maternal material. four checks. the browns of the father skin. leathered. the whites of the mother. like eyes. like mothy wings. the beiges of the brother. bland. the beiges of you. notice the redness. the exposed curling muscle of your legs. ground chuck and roan. Zé has quilted you. the click of knitting needles. the click, timely grin.
the burst finally at your feet. looking up and the sky black, red, a moon appalled. the
tree bursts with a noise of a jaw clamped down on lean muscle. the pooling on the
feet a white and ink striped viscous thing. the feet a somehow effective reservoir. the
foot warm under heat of basal tree temperature. the pock in the tree now. the pore
overused. edges of the tree skin thin and tired. tree skin flapping like a dried out ear
now.
the father slides the fingers.
the high room. cobalt flash and a wicker floor. the little eyes in the walls, black and swinging. face down on the wicker floor. nose in the creep carpet beneath. smell of the black mold and the tarnished silver and something sweet. face down and a boot on your back. the boot made of hardened tar. the boot kicked off. Zé nails talon yellow and smirking. slanted nail. shooting upward, curling back. curling like your hair. down your back the nail screws and slivers top layers of skin. zest gathered in a bowl. the bowl with the red bottom.
in this room the father in a chair. the chair with a crank salon-style. vibrating needles push through the backrest. the father and his mouth stretched open. cut in jagged lines. cut and the blood and the tooth matter on the floor. clingy to the touch. wine-soft and the āo āo āo slipping out with their brown hands rotting on the edges of his mouth hole. the strap pulling his head back. the chart on the door. the belted waist and the heaving weight. the door now an oval cat-eye tunnel. the walls a birdtone grey, the rooster folds. the walls and the tiny eyes flickering. the walls and their leaking.
the crib-cage room. mobiles from the pewter ceiling squeal dully. a dozen or so basinets. the blankets in each quilted in the skin, eyelash double-knot stitches. dragging knee marks at your feet. the groan, the one in the middle. the singular chair, rocking. the groan. the room wide open. the walls nowhere. the depth of the grey. the singe of the lost doorway. the shuttering floor, the cavern underneath buckles, swings. a basement heaves. the baby leaves the groan hanging in the air, murmuring dust. somewhere Zé sings a baby.
you are walking into a vending center. a room stacked with machines and the
machines made of the dull pewter. the floor now a mucus shell, now dried and
crumbling as you step. your feet congealing. somewhere a singing, a low bass drum
voice and one word imperceptible and crisp dry and the dark eye on the ceiling. the
first machine on the left is labeled the mother machine. inside, rows of mandibles.
rows of sweaters. rows of crochet roosters. rows of sequined eyes. rows of spine
block carved dice. a mandible dangling plastic claw stuck. you push on your shoulder.
you push on your leg. you push on the mother.
the machine stacks saudades. a number gets nothing, remembers itself.
the night room. the crawling black sky shadows. carved out black matter Zé-shaped kiss on the father’s cheek. undersky quivering father hulking corner pile. the infected father full with laughing spines, milky blood and clouded eye. the father hand tense and hard-tendonated fingers, spiked knuckles. spikes of whitest bone and pearl sheen. the sheen Zé-matter screened through the father sieve. the fine holes and through them the clots slow surging. tiny animators in his wailing bones. night sky backdrop and a nothing silhouette. the rooster caws its beak to crown, somewhere.
a pile. stacked high with sharp noses, arched brows. the singing stack wailing heavy
gut sounds. Zé in the corner and the small stringed box. around his hands folding.
folding and the noise plucked out in feathered notes. the space wall to wall bric-a-
brac clashing stuff. clanging together. figurines. tiny brothers. Zé on top of the pile of
saudades. the stringed box etched with little shards. the little shards a crowning spine,
your back forced straight. a canvas string from your mouth, from your mouth, a fish
cought thing. the string tied around his finger. the string in his mouth. bloatmouth
shining, juice. the tooth cling gathered string, the unfurling. the tiny brothers. the
stuffed mother. the father. the father. the father.
BOTH A DEVIL AND MYSELF
very little, the wind, the cavern space
the floor slammed gone
horsehair in clouds brown air puffed

savor the fist I soak it in fish oil and wine for you
tongue the little handcracks, finger webs
hungry and I’ll wife you

godless, godless,

the goblet slosh in my hand and I suspend
upside down to scream up and out the lungs the expansion the diaphragm
the scream from me is cloaked in bones and sugar skulls laced in wine and fish oil
and rooster caw
the solid scream a black rooster spurt
a vomit of lineage, a vomit of me right up the lacy skirt

no lightning strike damning the undertaker

but the craze, the mania
my hat on fire.
the screaming puffing nipple girl on my lap, a precious pet
the undertaker’s cape cloaking her shoulders and milky eyes
and the space’s suspended dust folding fangs in the air grey and unyielding
and the trickling under my hat a nagging cold now
and your mother over there with her arms over her head
her sliced underarm calcifying now
and down her middle a splaying slice and spread wide
and I’ve filled her with rope braided in your brother’s hair
and with athrobbing fish slipping ghastly breathless
and with a garland of clippings yellowed and necrotic
and an epic opened to a song of silent marbled children
and your hair beaded with her teeth silver shining light of my space
and the brightness on the eyes a sharp fingernailing
and my nosing, the fragrance of the cavern undeniable
on the ground a planted head mouth open, nose leaking
teeth tight, the jaw wrenching itself in and in
under my boot a flake of lip, an errant tooth
and the walls a blue vomit wet and fatty and from them the bodies, out from the holes
out from the holes for a tweaking, me with clamp teeth
your arm from one of them languid and summer struck brown
finger flash gripping air and cloying for a rest on my face
but my face marbled and away.

in the corner the flesh feast and the fanning girls
I am both a devil and myself.
and pages of false cheekbone
and my tongue drowsy, stirring my glass of what spills from your eye, slurry
a claw hand stiff claws up your thigh, the spider and the bloodwish
the tomb opened melted face, eyes in skull, his twig cross buried in the notch
a ribcage painted red and split open down the middle, a carving, an offering
skin pulled tight over your cheekbones a goodnight sculpting
my fingers pressed in for blush, hang you by the cheek from the ceiling
hang you by the pink to the room with your mother in it several times
my hat off and black hair shining
pulled into hell by the foot and the back scraping
wailing back leaving beige bits in pavement.
terezinha white palms up down the mineshaft
sculpted cheeks sharpened bladelike
fawnlike, her open mouth
the jarred spider let out, the slow upward climb
her galloping breath on my wrist
her coated teeth digging in, her drinking the blood
knees weak crumpled paper skin your fishboned father
open mouthed searching tongue split down the middle
and both ends squirming map searching and the blood in coils on my chin
the dance there, the grainy guitar and the soot air inflated lung song
I take him by the rib and dance, cloak windspun satin
he begins to ash in my hand
a bone snapped a twig dissolving in my palm
a string snaps, a fistful of dust down my throat
the curled fingernail on the nipple sunken and the hoarse voiced girl
rasping a swan song order for stop
will not give me her sweet lipped, evil bones.

and the fishboned girl, her black rimmed eyes vessels burst so like my own, and my fingers curled around her sugared neck.

a fatter girl and her puckered stomach a nesting ground and my nose curled into her navel and the twisting knife nails, her feathered mutter.
the cradled girl in my palm split down the middle,
sweet navel in two and fragrant like wet earth.
does not cry when I sing her open.

the pink toothed girl the ribless, dances, my boot held tight to chest.
chest heaving and twigs from her whiteness, spindle trees cloying.
the dance, the branches from under her arms, from under her feet
the floor seizing leaks a certain stale wet.

I with my chair I fashioned it from speckled bone and the paint of the birdfaced girl
her black eyes an alertness, her winged entrails stringing
the chamber the shimmering red
her familiar caw, her nesting at my feet.
you hanging from the tree, white dress in wind quivering
neck bent as a crowbar and under your eyes smeared, blacked out
an arm soft swaying ahead of a pit of bark gnarled stiff hole
and a slow drip from you would be a grassy pool
but my mouth right beneath the finger, lapping it up.
a square cut from your skull in the warehouse.
a fall from tree but not a dog I do not eat you whole.
but simmer the dress and buckle for the kiss.
the scarring ground opened blackest maw.
my belly with its own mouth fanged and tinged green
from the pulling pit organ rustling. With the
death dance. the thinned bones a glinting whiteness,
no lighted space. between the bones the melting sinew,
pitted red porous jerking dance, flickered knuckles.
the cloak around the bone neck so like my own swirled
and a dark shines through, a hole, an astronomic black.
my hand taken and invited. the fingers interlocking,
clicking nails against skeletal hardness. full skirts
spinning. bowls of scarlet dust. an ankle splices mine.
an open concrete space. far off the clicking of shoes.
the spear in my middle. terezinha from far off.
her pale eye a blind satellite and my finger wades through
terezinha down the mineshaft and the coal lapping skirt
terezinha throaty singing a spider song and as luzes da
terezinha and her strangled finger and the airless ring
terezinha and my omnicidal murmurs lulling her down
terezinha kissing the rooster and a feather brand on her throat
terezinha strung by the legs and her paleness drowning my hand
terezinha along the cavern walls and her notched spine my drum
terezinha in the tree and the tree wallowing in her flowing dress
the cloaking and chalk white face
eyes lined in thickest black. hers the face,
the quiver. up to knees in sand and shards of tooth.
slow walk and the driest air. eyes sunk in.
raw lips and their redness cupped on her brow.

she hangs from the house feet pointed ultimate down.
my pointed boot a song an ancestral battle cry from everywhere the shrill black cello.

a foot in her grave, her grave in the soot
and my defying fork.

my strained sucking. the capillary burst and bled out eye.
hers slithering soft down my throat.
the air the driest wine. the walls nowhere, the open black.