

## Negotiating Gravity (improvisational writing exercise)

I.

She doesn't want much more than everything as long as it's free. Sometimes pillows are hard. If an orange grew on a cactus, the needle might be tastier. At least she thinks.

The problem with thought is inherent, a domino you can choke on. She doesn't know this any better than us—she is threadbare, a rotting scarf in the attic of summertime that calls for scissors but forgets that they cut.

Cacti can cut and sometimes you might reply “Thank you.”

What to have for dinner? Loneliness with a side of rice—distance is only relative to imposition or obligation—she is lovely from far away or up close, but only in relation to each other.

To merge, to forge—as if we can and yet we try like peacocks to prove that we can beat the unbeatable and death will not have the last laugh—

—Perhaps the needle is better than the orange, one never knows—I suppose that's why the orange wins out while it's ripe—even though it's been pierced. She would most likely agree, and would never admit it if she didn't.

Admonishment is help in a box wrapped with an upside-down rainbow, and the value is the needle that feeds the pulp.

II.

“Torrent.” He wakes up to that word though it doesn't mean to him what it means to. It splits, halves and says what he wants it to—a “burger with fries” is a “meal” after all—

In his mind the main dish is parenthetical, the side dish a colon—

In his mind she lingers as a semicolon, the one you never use but that never goes.

Does a cactus ever get cold? Or is it always shivering? He wonders this as he peels an orange that reminds him of her—not exactly her, but a girl who ate oranges. A

parenthetical to remind that there is another who is not there—

A comma is a hiccup to him, but it sounds vaguely akin to the noise made when an orange is plucked from a cactus in winter, and smells like an upside-down rainbow in November, with frost but no snow—a photograph of cold without the chill atop a desk of memory reinvented.

Reanalyzed.

Reintroduced.

Retrospected.

Re-re-re.

Is it ever re-al?

He hopes so.

### III.

Two bricks rely on opposite ends in order to stack, but that doesn't quite work, so man made mortar. Which still dissolves, as does man. Did you know that butterflies only live a few weeks? The cocoon lasts much longer—a few empty cells grounded longer than those that flew. Sad, but true. Gravity demands flight. It demands it.

A hero, this, this "it"—something other than "that" or "which" which defines whether or not the bow of the rain is up or down in a universe that denies both and still embraces them.

At dinner, they talk but don't speak out loud. He wonders and wanders through a vast collective of collage—a pastiche of id and ego slapped together with pasty mortar the color of oatmeal.

She takes metered bites set to the tune of random chitchat. Her steak tastes like the desert. For dessert she orders ice cream. There's a hair in the bowl. They share, and neither one knows if there's anything better.