

REFLECTIONS

Border Guards, Part IV

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I The stylized dance
 around a worked body.
 They always ask
 your name and birth date
 but this time she
 responded sternly:
 “your *full* name.”
 “Sarojini.” Between
 Christian and surname
 my parents had slipped
 the memory of a poet
 Sarojini Naidu
The Nightingale of India.
 She marched with Gandhi
 married out of caste
 favored her words
 for independence.
 An otherwise disavowed
 history, home
 infused my hidden name
 as if it could be diluted
 by generation.
 A French kiss
 The syringe leaves
 one drop
 a rising sun
 on my prairie arm.
 Later that day
 I received a text photo
 the technician’s peering face,
 a message: “Cocktails?”
ii.
Rules and flesh
modulate strangers.
 Bureaucratic priest
 thumb searches a vein
 unwraps the swab
 unpapers the needle
 unravels the tubing

her oaths snapped
 on like latex.
 The lab tech calls me “sweetie.”
 In the stream of
 anxious sweeties,
 both of us tired,
 I ask why.
 She answers
 with a needle jab.
 No one would know
 about this tiny
 transgression;
 I deserved it.
 For 43 minutes
 the machine commands
 its meat to breathe
 don’t breathe
 breathe don’t.
 The technician watches
 the computer screen
 in the next room
 as bloodless wedges
 fall in rows.
iii.
Trust holds the possibility
that you will become lunch.
 “The PET scanner
 slices you like salami.”
 My doctor is a boy
 photographer with a new lens.
 I crave the fat,
 flesh, live peppercorn.
 Sometimes the road kill
 I pass on my way home
 no longer has fur, beak,
 hooves. Driving is
 like making dinner.
 “Tumors *love* sugar,”
 they devour radioisotopes
 like vultures who mistake
 poisoned flesh for carrion.
 Sometimes only a
 brown stain stretches
 across the five lanes
 of Highway 101.
 I open my car door,
 lean down, and lick:
 human, skunk, or heron?