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from 'Book of Shadows'

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FROM 'BOOK OF SHADOWS'

Erin Lyndal Martin

I came back with perfume
I had been to Herculaneum
I needed to know the truth
I needed flotsam and raisin bran

In Missouri I thought I could say it
I was ready to pull over and say it
I could have just fucking said it
but I wanted to get the words right

I had to open the witch museum
at the base of my throat
I had to cut so deep
in that vortex
that bones got in the way
the rest is simple circuitry

I could not find
a way for you to understand

I had a fistful of dillseed
wrapped in warped tinfoil
I shook it on the ground
Then the seasalt shook out too

& the movie marquee said Beware
I thought it was just for me

the thicket by your house
is dead till spring
this is not my fault

I shoved your mermaid in a jar
and put my clothes back on

the delta rush of gold
bravely sauntered on unassigned

The causeway bridge over Pontchartrain
I drove it myself
with an ear infection and a book of stamps
I drove it in the winter

back again with my mother
and then with a man
I didn't make myself
I did not make myself a man

I sang to Pontchartrain
the syllables dropped
like weighted birds
I had to take myself a bride

I wed the hudson
in a funny light

my maw become a rope
my fleshy parts a catacomb
and still the vatican library closed
what will I do

I idled behind a truck
plastered with slogans for chicken fat
I thought
I might learn to waltz

in a hotel lounge
there was never a boy
who brushed his hair

there was never a boy
who could do it twice

Then I took off the lace I wore
then I could not brush

the lipstick off

it would not erase
this is no decorum
for the body

I took cachaca
to the crossroads
I held the bottle
in my dominant hand

and tossed a letter
in the stripey path
& a man said Hey there,
& a man said Hey there

seven years passed
in a contusioned fever dream

now poised between two lakes
it occurs to me how long it's been
since I permitted plums
tumbled at the graveyard's gate

I ride the bus
with a copper bracelet
and a cabernet sauvignon
then drift to sleep in transparent colors

The ring I bought at the drugstore
seems to be quite cursed
I watch myself enact its machinations
I am thinking of filing a complaint

The man on the phone
was yanking his junk
He exploded all over my voice

I turned to a man with kinder hands
he said he was the man with kinder hands

he kept saying he was the man with kinder hands
he would not shut up about his kinder hands

I said I valued silence
he asked why I wanted to make this
all about economics

I swear I wish the smell of sage
didn't always make me gag
there are people who will burn it
just to shut you up

I have been reckoning with ghosts
the fictional kind and the real kind
I have been wondering
how to tell the difference

In a dream last night
I talked to you
and I don't know why it matters
if it was really you

some kind of egoic fingerprint
embalms the cerebral cortex

now I have to change my name
and hope that does the trick

I hope when I get old
I do not remember living like this

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Erin Lyndal Martin is a creative writer, music journalist, and artist.