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FROM THE HOUSE OF THE TREE OF SORES

Paul Cunningham

I locate what looks like a blood-swathed section of shattered flooring, a crudhole where a darkening tree trunk swells. I witness trunkish pressure, compression. I see where former tentakel capillary vessels chafed and spewed their inner along and away from the jagged floorhole, I see slightly shredded pedal arteries still pumping. Charisma. A chiasma of nerve bundles, branched channels, fluid-dripping branches containing plant-like pustules. Some containing veinlines of a knife-edged green. Neuronal cytoplasm leaks from numerous growth wounds, crusts over, scabs. Weak contractions, respiratory rhythms. Tracts of rotten, deflated alveoli sway aimlessly around scabbed-over sections of rough bark. The coiling tree branches continuously, generates turning, tooth-like fibers. Grub-like musculature. The tree of sores possesses a stomach, the tree of sores possesses an esophagus. I stare at its tongue-like lobes of bark, I stare at its tiny, seemingly motorized teeth. I wait for the mouth, for the möter sounds. I wait, I listen as the sores slowly form.

I wait in the house of the tree of sores. The height-adjustable house of the tree of sores. I wait for its möter to start, for its many teeth to grind. I wade in the pulpy filth of the mosh pit of household objects, the mosh pit of grotesque möter skills. I spot a commercial proposition drooling in the corner of yet another fake room. My eyes, mutilated by household objects. I can't see straight, I can't—only a flickering series of lights in front of my suddenly failing eyes. On-Off-On-Off. I stage-dive, I head-bang. On-Off-On-Off. I can't remember my name. I can't remember my name, but I remember the names of my children. My children? What children? On-Off-On-Off.

I stand before a trunk of stains, a tree of sores. It quakes and it quakes, it makes mor möter sounds: Look at yourself, head-banger, why do you stand there, shivering, slurring coldly with your stupid flesh? Why are you neglecting your children? Why are you neglecting their eggs? The tree of sores quakes once more, suddenly pukes out a little cephalopodal something, a crochet kraken. I pick up the slimy crochet kraken, drenched in child-killing bacteria. I shoot the sharp-jawed tree a punkish grin. Eggs? I ask. Yes, you morgue-born head-banger, the tree answers. They're lost and miming, pecking and performing the everyday gestures of this pop milieu, their pop's mildew. Careful, crash-dummy, before you crash and burn! My body oddly bursts into flames, I drop the crochet kraken to the floor. I stop, drop, and roll. Hundreds of bumps of something crack loudly beneath my

flaming roll. Ägg, ägg, ägg äggulor! ägg, ägg, ägg om, om, omelette, umm, umm, umlaut, a lot, a lot knocking, knocking, knäckt, cracking up. Cracking me up, I cry out.

Burnt bread, my bread body. Brödkavle, I keep rolling, I roll out my fires. I stare up at the tree, I stare up at the sores. I feel like a bruised roosthole, a local valve, a horahole, a horrorshow. I am up all night, blood flowing. A horhus, a hönshus. Am I hönhus? Hönsnät? Swells of my hen rolled away in the fire, I feel happy about this. But where are my children? Am I mor? Am I mother? Am I father? The lateral teeth of the tree clamp down onto my legs, sweeps my body inward. Are you their mother? Their mother tongue? Am I their mother? I ask. A channel of tied-together trash bags flap up and surround the fibrous trunk of the tree of sores. Lumen, vesicles of lens-generating tissue fills in. All over, all over. Makes, makes eyes. Eyes of light protrude from the trash bag channel of the tree of sores. Bags of swollen, of shit, of crud. I am up all night, blood flowing. I am swollen, I am shit, I am crud. I am mangled, head-banged through a kaffe table book's table of malcontents.

Beak-first, a blue chicken emerges from the trash bag darkness. (My hand-drawn, henjawn little boy.) A yellow chicken emerges from the trash bag darkness. (My hand-drawn, henjawn little girl.) They are my cultish acolytes worn like clipped images, so BAZAAR!, cult prophets snarling, pecking, pipping. They are my children, they are my chickens. Egg-making, their assault on my language. I decide to embrace this bellicose, this ventricose vows. I am, now, ignited by translation aorta, blood system. Blood flows through my swollen caruncles, my crinkled lobe of a page.

Paul Cunningham is the author of *GOAL/TENDER MEAT/TENDER* (horse less press, 2015), and he is the translator of two chapbooks by Swedish author, playwright, and video artist, Sara Tuss Efrik: *Automanias: Selected Poems* (Goodmorning Menagerie, 2016) and *The Night's Belly* (Toad Press, 2016). He is a contributing editor to Fanzine and his other writing has appeared in *Gigantic Sequins*, *DREGINALD*, *Fireflies*, *Bat City Review*, *LIT*, *Spork*, *DIAGRAM*, and others. His translations have most recently appeared in the OOMPH! Contemporary Translation Anthology and Witch Craft Magazine. He currently co-curates the Yumfactory Poetry Series with Jake Syersak in Athens, Georgia. His most recent poem-film, *It Is Announced* (a collaboration with Valerie Mejer Caso), premiered in India's 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale.