

EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS TO MY FUTURE HUSBAND-WIFE (OR, RITUAL IN WHICH GENDER)

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When my partner asks me for a self-
portrait, I tell them:

Just out of high school
I worked as a statue

of liberty. I wore blue velvet
and danced along an off-

shoot of route 6. Mascot
for freedom—I advertised

a tax agency. I had come
out that year.

Passersby rolled
down their windows,

threw lit cigarettes, trash, pennies.
I have always been one for retaliation.

So I threw the torch.

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My partner and I research the back-
yard tree with purple droppings

until we discover
she's a true princess.

Royal green blood with roots
the size of bodies.

This princess is invasive.
She garden-snakes under

our home and upheaves
what we thought we knew

of ourselves. And god,
isn't it terrible to gender

even a tree. Isn't it terrible
that she reminds us of what

we've named our bodies'
shortcomings. A flower

concaved as cunt
seems, right now, like a betrayal

we will never forgive.

But soon

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I dream that my partner leaves me
for eight years in the Coast Guard,

a kraken stings the surface
of this dark blue nightmare.

Split this dream in half and it becomes
four years and I still don't know

how to swim. None of this is real.
But god, my partner loves the water,

enough even, for me to get in.

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When my partner turns their hands
into window blinds, they smooth

my aging forehead with this new
type of shade, they call my skin

into perfect order with their skin.

I tell my partner I will be polite
to windows

only when I like what I see
through them. They understand

that this world is hell
bent beyond repair.

But inside
 one another
 there is a peace.

Inside one another
neither of us remembers gender—the meaning
of her or hers. She is lost
 to space. He was never
 that great to begin with.

We even misplaced the meaning of girl.

If we knew where it had been left,
we still wouldn't go get it.

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Today I am the age
of an arsenal
 of letters.

Between my partner's legs
I speak the whole

alphabet. They stop me

when I'm close
to what feels right.

At the end of the day
all we have is this ritual

of love, and that, I think,
will be enough

to live forever.

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