



blood orange

an experimental poetry tarot

I Have Faith in Birds

by A. Martine

i.

I'm good at cooking apology meals:
people tend to falter before a feast
where one has clearly laboured
put in sores and blood — even calluses
 it doesn't do well to thrust rancour against grace
 doesn't look good on the wearer of that sentiment
I should know. been cooking a lot of these lately.

watching with knitted zest as they wrestle with
whatever still compels them to be forgiving
 gracious patient and understanding

Sometimes it takes a bit longer, so
I think — despite knowing that I should not —
perhaps I should show them my scarred skin
 pretend I knifed myself slicing radishes into juliennes
 pretend I'll endure anything for them with the proviso
 that I be forgiven for things passed and yet to come
 never mind that there were two lies in those lines

ii.

I'm good with the plucking, with the feathers hurled like shrapnel
 my own stories leave me cold:
 impersonal as the hairs I meticulously yank from my body
 (mine, but only temporarily so)
 panoply of disjunction

I'm good with that strip and flaying
 it's what comes after that I much less subscribe to
I carried evil eye jewellery for years
 for fear I might attract more gazes than I knew what to do with

look at me — don't look at me
see me — don't see me

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Accusative.

The spleen impulse a systole
 beached and blanched
 but still yearning to be handled tenderly

When I was a child, I jitterbugged by myself in the middle of a roomful of adults
Even as I broke sweat over the weight of their eyes
I thought: *eventually I'll take flight and all this will be just a memory*
I thought: worth the enduring of those fragile seconds of being seen

iii.

Today I thought I'd make an omelette, and the lid of the
saltshaker tipped over and fell: a dull thud salt like gentle spooling lace

 my Father, he doesn't like salt
 my Mother, she doesn't mind

I idle at the stove thinking about balance beams and compromises
I idle at the stove thinking about waste and opportunity
so good when it comes to the begging-that-is-not-begging
— start with making them think they are the ones at fault

I have never asked someone to stay, never asked someone to love me,
never begged not to be left alone — at least not in so many words
 I'd sooner warble to death: eggshells are eggshells
 even if we crunch and step into them from time to time
 maybe that's why birds love me, and I love them (although they terrify)
 because we both know the value of weightlessness
 and keeping wind underfoot

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