

An abstract painting featuring a central, vertically oriented, ethereal figure that appears to be a woman's form, rendered in soft, blended tones of pink, red, and blue. The figure is set against a dark, textured background of deep green and black. The foreground and middle ground are filled with a dense, chaotic layer of vibrant colors, including shades of pink, magenta, red, green, and yellow, applied with thick, expressive brushstrokes and visible texture. The overall composition is layered and textured, with a sense of depth and movement.

SUSURRATION

Liza Rose





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Cover art: "Surfing on Pollen" by Reynier Llanes



## AT THE PARK

there was a sound all around like breathing-  
no, not breathing something  
after the wild breath of wind through  
green green leaves the trees' susurrations  
sounded like something  
no, not like something i could name  
if i had to  
i'd say it was like a mouth  
so near the ear that it feels like warm water  
or maybe like dust  
or cold sunlight  
goose pimples prickling the neck at the closeness  
of breath and i breathed  
with the trees who were not breathing  
at all and their breathing sounded  
like nothing  
and everything

## SOLACE

outside, February desires  
August. the honeyed sun

desires to return  
gray-graveled snow to clouds

and soft vapor. in the flowerbed,  
brown and heavy-headed hydrangea

desire to be  
limelight green again.

in the distance, beige hillsides  
desire the arrival of spotted fawns,

the unfurling of wet legs.  
deer desire sunlight and grass, blackberries

and the heaven beams of headlights. closer  
to town, farmers desire warmth and rain

and no deer. strawberry fields  
desire this, too. fallen fruit and rinds desire

the sweetness of decay.  
flies desire these rinds. and tire-smearred deer.

and, of course, getting trapped inside houses.  
in my kitchen, the ants desire

breadcrumbs or coffeecake.  
on the phone, my mother desires solace.

outside the bar, drunk  
women desire bittersweet tobacco.

## VIVIFICATION

on the windowsill, the venus  
flytrap's purple-brown heads  
rest in a circle, mouths dried  
in half-word or plea or yawn. she is

just sleeping, i hope, as the lady  
at the market said the carnivorous plant  
would in this season of Demeter without  
Persephone. you don't have to feed her

insects, but could if you wanted to, and maybe  
if i found a sundried fly beneath  
the window, i'd give him new life: bury him  
in her soft jaws-

she, whose name came from the goddess  
of love and fertility,  
but was called *tipitiwitchet* by male scientists  
derived from *tippit* and *witchet*- archaic

terms for vagina,  
which reminds me of the film *Teeth*,  
which reminds me of my body and  
Persephone's. in my skin,

the tattoo artist trapped a butterfly.  
in their skin: a venus flytrap  
in black and white. *i got it*  
*because they're hard to care for,*

*after an ex told me i was too much*  
*to take care of.*  
which reminded me of my body,  
and Persephone's, and every woman

who has ever asked a sad, sad, mortal man  
for the bare minimum, or for purpose,  
or has ever asked on bloodied knees:

*vivify me.*

## RECIPE

*passed down through generations of women*

1. prime her  
soft skin, slather  
like butter on prime steak.
  
2. cover anywhere that shows  
imperfections  
in the meat. the product  
if applied too heavily  
will settle  
in places she shows  
human emotions.
  
3. carve out the bones,  
the hollows- cheekbones, jawbone,  
eyelids, bridge of nose – with dark  
lines like sharpie marks saying *cut here*.
  
4. blend  
to soften.
  
5. sponge on pink liquid  
blush to feign  
there's blood beneath.
  
6. gold garnish  
on the eyelids, eyeliner  
in both corners and mascara to mimic  
cow or doe eyes.
  
7. glaze  
with soft highlighter  
like sweat  
the places sunlight falls most.
  
8. draw iron-red  
on her lips, red like the apple  
in a pig's mouth.
  
9. set



her out.

10. let her  
be feasted upon.

I CAN'T HELP IT I WANT

to run wild like a deer  
after a couple of shots

of vodka with no chaser  
the city streets dirt

paths beneath my black heel  
-ed boots highrises ancient trees

streaking past and it is spring  
and my friend runs with me

our lungs full of sweet wind hearts pumping  
young blood as she laughs and laughs

like she is happy  
and i am so happy to see her happy

for the moment and i want to be alive  
this way forever i can't help it

when we rest she sits on the edge  
of a young-daffodil flower bed

and as she smokes the moonlight shadows  
her eyes and i can tell she is thinking again

about her dead best friend.

ON APRIL TWENTIETH

my lily-of-the-valley posture  
on a blanket on the grass  
in a park in New York City;

i'm trying so hard  
to romanticize this life –  
the way flower petals fall

overhead like confetti, and  
shiny bubbles break through  
the collective haze risen

from a thousand glimmering cherries  
in the hands of a thousand smokey-breathed  
strangers on other blankets on the same grass

in the same park in the same city in the same time.  
i inhale it all. exhale.  
say how beautiful it is

to contribute to this  
one great cloud and be  
oh so rooted

in the moment  
and M laughs,  
says she knows i'm high.

## ECHOES

here are some sounds i have heard

    echo: a gunshot  
against trees, the high bark  
of my childhood dog, my palms  
coming together, my best friend's laughter,  
a scream, *i love you* - i do not know how  
it works. something  
about soundwaves. lingers and dissipates

    like emotion. Echo  
loved Narcissus but she could not  
save him from himself. i know  
i pick up phrases easily,  
repeat back what is said to me-  
it's a form of echolalia  
and i fucking hate it. but i love  
repetition and echoes from one artist's  
work in another's. the way we repeat  
and we  
repeat and

    echo  
    echo

## OVERWINTERING

it's the wet season when i want nothing  
more than to strip my skin and submerge  
in idleness like a koi fish burrowed  
in soft sediment.

i used to think when the lake  
froze over, the fish froze with it, thawed  
again in spring – a childish sentiment.

in winter, most fish go deep down  
beneath a layer of ice, reduce activity, slow  
their heart rates.

when my heart rate slowed  
and the paramedic wouldn't let me leave  
until it picked up again, she flinched  
at my cold hands. i was alive and  
i was in shock.

i used to imagine how  
long months passed for the rest of the world  
spare the frozen fish.

as an adult, i remember this  
while trying to find the language  
for trauma.

some butterfly species enter diapause,  
a dormancy which can occur in any life stage.

this was supposed to be a poem about fish.

some overwinter in hollow trees,  
rocks, wood piles, buildings.

but i could never look down at that ice  
without my reflection staring back.

some species fly somewhere warmer.  
some can only swim deeper.



i cannot strip this skin.  
i am still waiting for spring.

a pinned tortoiseshell butterfly  
looks like a red sun frozen mid-sky.

## THE ART OF THE QUIET

## Statement of Poetics

heartbreak of morning,  
forsythia, fish scales  
on ice at the grocery store, white

cabbage moths in my grandparents' garden, rain  
collecting on pine needles, worn grass  
desire paths, birds' shadows, butterflies'

shadows, leaves' oceanic shadows, the lines  
around my mother's sea-green eyes, the freckle  
by my best friend's eye, gold flecks

of pollen on bee butts, pink-green  
iridescence on pigeons' necks, braids  
in horses' hair, the wild smell

of wild onion grass, mint smell of tomato vines,  
squirrel noses twitching for cashews, the taste  
of an orange weighed in my mother's palm, the weight

of a shield bug on my hand, the green of his being  
- my job as a poet, as a human being, merely  
to pay attention to these small things.

