

The Recluse

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June 2013

The Poetry Project

Poem

It would have been impossible
folly to hide them
behind walls, hedges, or thickets, to have once
been upon a certain road or to
a certain point and then return,
unless you had to return
to get the buried treasure
you buried there one hundred or so
years ago. Is that nickel
wooden? Then toss it
in the fountain and make yourself
at home in the wicker diamond
house on Elm on Clinton. Doom
to kick a kinsman in the kidneys.
Rotating your tires,
any word yet on the fire escape?
I put a spell on you for
genuine hope with certain
misgivings, sure, but the beat
still goes boom in my marble halls,
like a lawny firmament for good.

Poised for Victory

Poised for victory
when my men fall ill
and I'm more afraid
that they should desert me
than we should fail.

There are worse things
than failure. Just commit
to something. You can
be your own dentist.

How could anything hang so
low, look so sun-faded but
talk so loud. I get so jealous,
get a sort of jealousy swagger,
total visionary, don't
fence me in, it don't float.

Some joke huh?

I walk amongst my men so they won't
get disheartened, tell them soon
we'll get away from it all
in the magic forest. Don't
wait up, I just have to
lock it and I'll be right there.

Every seat filled and
thoroughly satisfied.

Another rough night at the opera.

Paradise Garden

Out in space, that shit
ain't right, somewhat
less valuable than a ticket
to someone who
thinks they can manage.

In the other world the way I
foster communal living is great
until someone becomes legendary
drinks the whole gallon in one gulp.
The rest is campfire.

Looked through my visions
to my visions' visions, a vestigial
ritual from before I was
formative, paper and plastic.

Around the globe and under the fridge
and then, after the party, to the hotel lobby
where I will leave you for a moment
by a stack of folded-up boxes
come back with knowledge, petite fours.

Tunnel after tunnel, the time
I showed up to around the time all the ducks
emerged from the water, returning
the bread with vengeance and regret,
around three minutes.

Laura Henriksen

You might nap in a chaise lounge (warm air
possible any time of year), but not really rest.
Birds of paradise bushes. Ornamental mandarin orange trees
yield the most bitter fruit.
I left there for an even more restless city.
Listen, New York is never quiet or completely dark.
Agitated human thought pervades everything.

* * *

Walking east on 13th Street at night
there's a river less than a mile away.
The crusty blocks of tenement buildings
give no evidence of it, not even a damp draft.
What we've always needed is a volcano,
not a big one necessarily with leaping flames,
spewing boiling lava all over the neighborhood.
No, a demure fumarole the size of the Consolidated
Edison Plant, would be fine, with jungle and Tarzan's Jane
summoning us to a sacrifice.

* * *

The Four Roses on Canal Street had a great juke box.
So did the Ukranian Bar on Second Avenue.
What we meant by “great” was that we liked
songs we paid a quarter to play, as well as those
chosen by complete strangers. Come to think of it,
the box at the Orchidia wasn’t bad either.
At the Ukranian, David Essex’s “Rock On”
was the musical keystone of the jukebox’s collection.
At the Orchidia it was Rod Stewart’s version of “The First Cut
is the Deepest.”
Hardly anyone ever played the titles appearing in
Cyrillic alphabets.

* * *

L.A.’s oleander bushes and desert palms
didn’t prepare me for salaried work. Nothing did.
My wife earns our money printing textiles.
Not inking the presses or crafting designs,
she supervises production and names the colors.
My son says, “Dad, I need a drink of water.”
I stop folding the laundry to go get it for him. Meanwhile
a hawk perches outside our third-floor window.
Well-camouflaged, its gray and brown feathers
are almost identical in cast to the bare oak’s.

* * *

The night sky out our louvered bedroom windows.
Neon C-A-R-N-A-T-I-O-N MILK, blink, darkness (repeat
til dawn)
The red "LT" of Lee Towers, L.A.'s first skyscraper,
twenty-two stories tall in defiance of earthquake fears.
A double-lamped beacon revolves atop the Mutual of Omaha Building,
which at street level houses the Wilshire La Brea Pharmacy,
home of prescription drugs, sundries, and candy bars.
Why don't I remember the moon and stars?
How often did it rain so hard that the basement pump's
electric engine would switch on to save us from rising
flood waters?
On some hot nights or early mornings I'd hear water lapping
in the pool next door. Dr. Harold Thale was swimming alone.

* * *

When you see these poems
try not to think of me or yourself.
Consider our lives as a given,
our deaths too. New York and Los Angeles will die,
but first I lived there and flew from one to another.
One time in a Boeing 747 passenger jet
I passed over late afternoon in the Grand Canyon.
Sitting next to me was a man I thought I knew from high school.
But I am remembering this all wrong.

* * *

Ed Friedman

Ex Machina

every year is the year
the world ends
as I understand it

X is to blame
or aerosol or the barbarity of X
in which we all partake

as is our way
we have come too far
to turn away

from this kernel
that shapes us into other
than animal or just

animal enough
to breed and break
it is a science

the study of what it is
in this mind and muscle
that makes us

sway the weight of us
toward give or take in the bare
face of each open mouthed need

and what is our mistake
this clamor that trails us
that shakes us to sleep

what we are capable of
what great hope
what will become of me

Lament for the Living

where there is silence there is nothing
I can say to replace what the water has entered
and ruined what the rain wipes away

where there was a town there is fire
there is nothing

I can say a black mold blooms
a hollowing
a blue flame licks its prey

where there is a city
or say there is no city

with its lines of sky
where there is nothing say the moon
asserts itself between the clouds

where the darkness is a curtain and the stars
have this secret

Camille Rankine

The Carrot And Ashes Treatment

It doesn't pay to contradict a Medici.
First Layabout to First Diner, then
First Layabout again. Bashed by the
freedom club. Sister, you've such a
fragrant habit. The left hind hoof of
the elk will cure the falling sickness.
As salted fish is beaten with hammers.
Other stupendous suns. Shameless as
a leopard on fire. Frost if you're prone.
Tokens, baby, goat and all. Only six
bronze swords in all Italy. An ill couch
will it be. Some look for food, some just
want to sing. The Sicilian goatherd tells
the history of Pan pipes. The Niles springs
from the Mountains of the Moon. Tobias
dispersed his father's blindness with the
gall bladder of a fish. Commemorate my
death as you did that of Diocles. Fill my
trough with barely and call me Chickeness.

The Enigmatic Pork Chop

Gypsy wig, who keeps a giraffe
in an alley? A cow go up a ladder.
A steamboat on land. When questioning
ends celebrate actuality. It drew
its greatness from a fountain higher
than itself. Drawn by oxen or by man,
not for nasty cleanness. Three days
of fair weather for one pound of tobacco.
If it's Wednesday it's Raphael. Ceremonial
soulcake. The most horselike tree. The
nuptial flight. Airplanes for cake halves.
Cockroach stroke juice. A helmet for snack.
De Rigueur hat cupboard. Garish teak
pieces in chop suey palaces. Mock
apothecaries. Security coffin with a
speaking trumpet. What's the word
for a German hospital for the dead?
The angels pelted Satan with stars.
And the bear shook his fat sides at the joke.

Dweller On The Threshold

Daughter of the bear-feeder, Theodora
ruled Rome for twenty-one years. You
could have been emperor of the Goths,
but remained loyal to a Roman who later
put you in chains. Could New Jersey
have been Vinland? Did Leif Erikson's
sister-in-law make a pilgrimage to Rome?
Leif the Lucky found wild grapes in profusion.
With curses the Druids defended the
Anglesey grove. With swords the Romans
slaughtered the Druids. You retained
your flag at the expense of your country,
you kept your system of government but
sacrificed your land. I am she who
findeth fruit for men. Don't dance, write
a saga. We'll stay with King Olaf
while we wait for favorable winds. We
took to the sea to escape the pettiness
of land. Freedom from excessive regularity.
Promise of the unwrapped gift. I can smell
the thunder. Icky blew up the wrong harbor.

mens rea

"actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea"
*the act does not make a person guilty
unless the mind be also guilty*

for you, a peach from this tree
and a letter from a man who killed
another man on a train platform, and another
card from a man who looked on and did nothing,
and a tenderest nod from the man who sat in the room with twelve others
and did a something that was nothing for days and days and days

but for you
a peach from this tree
where I fell when a bee
scared me, I fell into thorns
and the sky stood by and did nothing
is this how it felt

Cardinal Points

North: **Sothis:** *Ehlan wa sablan*

They smoke a lot of weed at the Nile. No shit. Mohammed beached the boat six miles from Aswan and took us and two Italian dudes to a wedding. We gave his grandmother aspirin. All the people down South there real black, too, mixed, look like us. We rode in a pickup to the stage where colored lights played across the green fields between the river and the dusty towns. Ali unrolled a mat and I tried to figure out how this was a wedding. Everyone smoking aromatic blunts and only men out there. Sergio said it was extra strong, good stuff. He built nuclear reactors in France and felt no guilt. Conversation took mad long in four languages, so we found the women inside the compound drumming and drinking hibiscus tea. *Min feyn enti?* They asked us. *Where are you from?* *Min Amrika*, we answered. They sang us a song. A little girl in a blue dress held my hand. It was three o'clock in the morning and they were singing about the dam. *Min Amrika*, she said, patting my arm. *Like Oprah, the lady on tv.*

South: **Uzantsi:** *Molo, Sisi*

The blabk stabf have lost my keys! she wails, mascara smearing. Women in headscarves speaking Xhosa swim by and find them behind her desk. We fuck under faux leopard skin to pass the time. Drivers toss money at the children who do a dance in the road. Boys gather at the gate, then run and get more faces to press against the bars of the Hole in the Wall Resort to gawk at me, my girlfriend, and the Afrikaners, plunked down like meteors by the sea. Dusty fountain in the lobby. A hole in the middle of a donut that is a village in the middle of the Eastern Cape by the blue blue Indian Ocean. Time creeps no matter how many rounds of cards, Monopoly or fucking we throw at it. At dawn, we won't duck under Xhosa laundry lines to get to the beach, *See a Natural Wonder! Hole in the Wall!* *Oh, you won't go!* whines Mascara Mania. *Safe trip, then! Play-shab!* Pleasure is the treeless horizon. Ngungi cattle spill onto the road and fences disappear. Boys in whiteface walk back from initiations. Adolescence happens everywhere.

Erica Doyle

I've paid attention to the person at the podium
and I've paid attention, at the same time,
to the stairs that diagonally transect the central
of the three arched windows. An unrolled tongue.
The click of the handle and scrape of the floor
and the heads of those who always turn around
turn around, and the old villain slips in and leans
against the back wall while the door's still closing
slowly because it's so heavy it's been fitted
with one of those pneumatic armatures at the top,
standing against the wall like he'd come direct
from a remote farmhouse where the wind
ceaselessly whining on the stops of every aperture
keeps a few desperate inhabitants on edge
every miserable evening, and to think a thought
to its conclusion in embodiment proves an effort
without reward. I doubted he'd recognize me
or felt sure he wouldn't, and couldn't find him afterwards
anyway, having being caught asking, but almost against
my will, as if by some mechanical action, for a friend
to send me a piece I really think she never had
any intention of sending. Then one of those big come-
from-behind hugs slowed me further. I forget
the whole rest of the night—didn't someone in its wisp
of a course say, but was it in reference to the
hydra of competition or to the sensitivities
of their exorbitant heart, "I worry about everybody"?
The hour when people take a sudden interest in the data
waiting with data's creepy serenity in their phones.
'Night, y'all, and be careful standing atop the Himalayas,
they are a row of bottom teeth.

Greenpoint Av

2nd Av

Cathedral Pkwy

I ride from one to the other
but not back again,
sometimes with my little girl—
who consoles me by needing something—
sometimes alone,
we know the subway's
death in poems but why?
because no one on it
knows anyone I know
and my phone won't work

what's hard is trying to matter
but not in any of the ways

the next one was going to be
the right one, we thought,
in spite of ourselves

then it came, a joke so fast
and subtle that only one guy laughed—
how he must know himself,
with the integrity of one of those microchips
that perches on a fingertip
like a fleck of tobacco
or a sequin you pick up from under the bed
by pressing down on it
very hard

AT LAND

It's all still here except
my credit card, the cab it's in,
when she steps out I flip through
channels never to alight and
you and I travel to the beat of a different drum,
assorted justifications grow tatty on razor lips,
words to their ballyhooed higher plane elevate voluptuaries but
still, sandbags of printer's sorts, a fancy book
exudes sweet crisp musk of fresh ink and
what is glittery we understand by glittery to be glittery and
that contest had one object and
it was not moral victory,
in a recurring nightmare my male friends take me out behind the bar
to beat the shit out of me for my infractions against patriarchy, many,
I wish it would come true, a little bit,
in this version of chess you begin with only the kings
then unplay the game, each move resurrects a piece,
soft stressed white rind around bent black broken plastic
pawns and knights set to wander without compass o'er green hills
like a toy train whose tracks are lost
he kept looking over his shoulder for your debut upon that rat-trap's scene
while I zoned out on a simple film of vows spoken into bathroom mirrors interleaved with shots of
their transgression often in the very same outfit, and
sorry, digital favors don't count,
archers, *don't aim*, Dawn says denial shreds the mind
there is an hour of morning when the boats begin to tickle the belly of the river and
one is as tentative before the mysterium as a Greek in Egypt
or a whiteboy brought under guard to the head of the cartel
whose office door is the engorged gleaming door of a bankvault and
over sinuous lines of poetry slave ships never cease to travel and
here is another Tuesday in Nature,
cheer up, hair turns over in the wind like haystack, pitchfork,
creak of hinge or leather jacket and
the puddles can't contain themselves, or something,
good deeds and evil deeds are the back of your hand and its palm,
snow sashays, the dramaturge ruins the experience of the cafe for everyone,
the little "X" I drew in Sharpie on the web of my thumb to remind me
to calm down when drunk has faded,
if warm pink gasoline flows through our veins we will carry jugs,
if the map we're still in or on folds up, tramp creases,
mark you when its moment arrives the double image of my wink
and a pair of enormous jaws closing over it,
it's after Christmas; come back; stay; have missed me; forget there's anything
at all beyond this place; there isn't

I
yi yi
three graces
two thousand years and change
struggles no one cares about let this
not be a ploy
to make them care
“sign with your finger, please”
how gratifying it comes back wet
gave up almost all of what can be noticed
to notice one thing perfectly
like someone at night
campfire in front, woods behind
chest warm, back cold
low growl
like book reviews
from animals in the treeline
unable because of some ancient bargain
to approach the flames

o loneliness

loneliness plus difficulty

loneliness plus difficulty plus mad hope

loneliness plus difficulty plus mad hope plus the poison of the past

loneliness plus difficulty plus mad hope plus the poison of the past plus social realities my complicity
in which is weirdly or you might say classically heightened by my attempt, lifelong at this point, to
believe kindness or its expert recital can undo or at least shame those forces in their of course
insensate functions

loneliness plus difficulty plus mad hope plus the poison of the past plus social realities my complicity
in which is weirdly or you might say classically heightened by my attempt, lifelong at this point, to
believe kindness or its expert recital can undo or at least shame those forces in their of course
insensate functions
plus Time that bad motherfucker
and ruiner of intentions
who nevertheless gets you high
and shows you something

Matt Longabucco

The Agonists

Every one began dying, and the threads
Unwound one after another.
Everything'd seem fine and I'd find these pockets
Of lonely daydream. I'd read my dad's
Books looking to find out who he was
Or what he felt. I'd look for
My sister in an empty suitcase.

We had left places of confiscated clutter
whose weaving into song shouldered
rust over prosperity.
pearls clipped cupidity, cutting us away.
Recoverers of stains unfolding bold blood
solves and muttering afterthoughts

O tectonic plates, my precedents
echoes like bells
a warped and static mix tape
a glimpse of the many outcomes
getting older and trying to stay young

not being able to tell the difference when it mattered
he called me "a filthy uneducable little drifter
of the plains." Migrants. People came here
with a body of music, firing up their empire agonies.

Our theories were transmographied,
gunned down just outside our father's home
constantly being returned to the present.

I, enigma, fortify breath handsomely
harness all fallible energy here
in my lonesome cubicle of parity.

While I pour my breath a Dr. Pepper
"An engine boils afternoon air above &"
oil pumps, timing belts, cylinder sleeves
mate like crankshafts & reverse their rotation
escaping with a well-timed jump

Replaced with different anomalies of feeling
I rely on sensory input to motion
My advanced standing still. Landscapes withered
While down on the stoop we waited for them to show up,
long overdo, and Dino told us how boring we are.

a green diplomatic bubble recognizant
of its futureless serenity whips
now the march of sand slips
how can we opt enjoined and sculpt
deep in whose widow calcifies the root

I photo keep speak the sweet spleen speak
feather cap mea culpa hurdle
pour deep in the third story

Nothing happens.
hinting countries & lights flickering
drink shadows from daddy longlegs
sunset beaks.

kick it, kick it nostalgically
wrapped up in Great Grandma's blanket,

Fetch some food for the mega fauna
O permissive babbling blow my house
into a spittoon's worth of wended ways.

In felony we soap
knee-deep in exorbitant economy
until a sea of it
not drowned by luck
I would do anything for
but maybe I'm stuck here
I can't just give it all away
I feel your arms inside of me
reaching out from it, placating,

Through the sealed door behind me bus
brakes squeal in the echo chamber stairwell
identity created by actions, a sum storm
 twitching and known
Connecting planes of equal change and atmospheric heaviness
Living on sums, moneyed and nerved, acquiring Maria.

That should be able to observe
Jack the Ripper disappeared, longer and
foolish. The performer is much like
Jack, bonded with hysteria,
across the airwaves, into people's home.

We took huge social problems and misidentified them
so that we could do it anyway to anyone.

I awoke as a system of postulants
but preferred a lazy, dissociative method.
I'm glad that I'm lazy, I could've been you
I called them up and invited them to
The movies. My brother and I waited.

Your glass of poems, turns into ten,
if you drape a pair of pants over hobbled milk money
I'll see you in 1983. You will be decorated for innocence.

My mating gear is magnetic
 Imagination never original
 In the applications we know.
I don't
 Think you can handle it
Disaster tends to strike,
 then I call in the closer.

I wish I could go back
 angular approaching monitors,
 maybe I'd tell myself to do it anyway
that impress in the carnal way.

Kid empty spackling eternity
& inexplicable drives, their reasoning.
pixilated with fears
hedging the political landscape of the country
but a meal will do. After all, I don't want
to spend my whole life grieving.

Once I rode a California Zephyr
the opposite direction
 from absolute sexual mist.
It ended five days ago as a twinge.

It's impossible
placated with tonics
then embarrassment
from over-elevation
I was looming I could not
disguise, added echo & fuzz
gaping at everything at once
inebriated, pine nuts

I wanted to spell it with an X
To maintain pulse against a person with decorative lacing
My friends are confounded or contented and joined
to varying avails. I will paint their ambiguities
on my long shadow of rotating
dispersions & organic selection.

Our own symbiotic spawn
I was raised in a New York City
that killed itself, punk was the death.
Much of my sense of experience
Now will rocket to Memphis

In my early thirties I had the goods.
I was a slim patient too but deceased in capsules.
We had no choice,
reality reserved for red skid marks on skin
while blue veins quiver.

What I like is reduced page size
what I despise is the autocorrect feature.
My mistakes are continuous enough to be handled.

He'd gone out lying after a while.
Not that understanding things will help you
Made from our bones
Why does that seem so odd?
Part of this life has been removed with them,
making us new people.
Traffic victims.
I replace them with loyalties and absence.

Collection of cherry ghosts
I'll go out for a pinto bean tonight with cotton
Coletti sews up the map I've become
what I meant to be which is nothing
I'd swear to in a collection of accidents
feeling less defined and friendly
the circumstances of naming continue.

Placed low on the register take this history.
She lived in some way I never found out about.
I didn't account for my loneliness as a factor
And I never managed quite to see her.

I gather & return to my room. I hit the pipe.
This poem is being and this composition
is the room where we meet
in the grimy metropolitan subspace,
where we match micronauts
and rest permissively in Wyatt.

Compensated by carbon dalliances
As another ill-fated 20 minutes
Has come and pass in said ill-fated cubicle of doom.
I will rock no more a boat, nor crank its didactic tractions
nor cartwheel through financial transactions
Lighten up, Eddie.

San Francisco when I was still doing
Certain things for the know completely
Fictitious and the balance gotten now I suspect
 suspicious lie in tactile heavens
and deep into Darth Sasquatch
 Many manifestations of natures
Liar moments decay

it's ok to be fragile, sort of standing
held idle by law or language. I think of luck
as lying on this ray of light

Edmund Berrigan

[BUILT// THOU TENDER// “MINE”]

[how do I call you by yr name
u atomic lizard dawn-crested pink-
tongued in truth a pheremonal lion furred an
anarchistic nestled down? this loss is always
mine to speak it.

I am only as much is is I am is only a my is.
I am only a my is a love is a keeping is only
a lie is a my lie is as only as much as I is.

“lizard-brain” “flute” “gut”

an am need is glint is held am holding a my in
is in my there a mine in loving in is there a only
inheld am my is an only is kept warm as much.

I build a bower I bend the world I break &
shred to soften it I fasten joists & girders
all “aglut” w. Do. I bend the world to fasten it
into a lie a hope to own inside of it a blueness
as a bell—

thou “tend” (you tender) u hoofed I tender, build.
yr heat Xchanged yr breath 4 mine— lip-crusted
w. morning, mornings rafter’s slung the sky soft
often.

I am dulcet in flimsy dwelling I flimsily inhabit
like a messy mess falconed w. doubt. it is just crazy
to posit an architecture to live inside of you are a need
of my need for warmth a built thing exists
for a moment in the falseness— it rings (is ringing
there)

the bitter binds to fats the sun rises lower in the winter
you have to jig the rim & lower it these paths are made by habit
they trace a daily pattern— this is a system that
emerges as opposed to a designed system— inheld in close
proximity, little creature—

you can sleep in any old field— in any clearing—
in any park or forest. I jig the world to re-arrange it
in the deepening light of familiar objects— in the familiar
light of deepening objects, placed—

I place am you in the need of a in it is a my in the
is as mine is is only there small as mine is is only
is a desire for the in the hold it there inbuilt is a mine in.

is a lie in which in the place there is is a hope placed
in my inner living in the need you lie in there is it is
against in warmth is against in held the mine in yours is
and dwelt there, breathing, thing.]

(P)LACE

Slake copper shone each blink slight rhyme
Echo (swallow) egret (neck) blind (-ing) (sign)

Apart in the hollow (heaven) a part of the heave
Wilderness scrape naked order which succumb
Sieve of it (tilt) open (eye) devour (sky) home
Is a stitch across the surface (music) thick (muscle)
Is a tremble in response to a tremor (tree or acre)
In the architecture mirrored inward

Crystal lattice or crushed asphalt

.

What lake what prism wheat
What prison what blank slate

The apparent simplicity of things breaks down upon closer examination
The apparent complexity of things breaks down upon closer examination

Harmony is the opposite of order

We are “the perimeter of the pasture”

.

Air (isle) iris (eagle) eager (meager) flight
Optics unravels rivers it rivals them in winding

Shimmer a covalent mirage (my city)
Human (animal) with teeth (truth) growl (grovel)
Gravel worth its weight in gold (greed) a hope (halter)

This rich material arrives on a flat plane
The dimensions of which rupture in the air (glare)
Listen (rush) falter lower (here) layer on layer
Pulse or pressure rapt as weather

Compile me a place in which to place a gaze
a partial landscape (lace)

IMMERSE – AS MY PHENOMENA – RETRACT

loot// be heist. rock my dove my
dividend. cavern ellipse is sudden, deep.
by notch the sun marks winter, bare
dendritic trees. all hustle is a nest & faked
there. Creep into it as vine be tangled
hair. each place is just a place. tangle my
hair into this place. what pride is is
knowing.

slake// be driven. as frost up the thin
blades climb. to be elided, self, attention
grasps at things, subsides. nature my
nurture, or vice versa, to be tended, tend,
as this is. or else you will freeze in
winter.

strangle// embrace. vines all hairy &
muscled grip & climb. hot pink the
leaves, red the leaves, shining & oiled the
leaves, violet the leaves & neon green,
atrocious the leaves, clinging to their
twigs. & the wind does blow it does
abrade the surface of the world, it does
crack the weak trees & and cause the sky
to go.

mimic sap swallow sudden gulped
draught wind
from swept horizon bough// crack limb
what thought no angel no solemn rock
be perched be hawk eat mice.

mingle dirt grid lock summer's navel
draw yellow leaves of thirst cuss a rough
bark is alive, is staying alive, intrinsic
dropped fruit, got given, got got.

moss-encrusted. lip held to animal
breath from breathing trees breathed back
even tho they are starving// drought.

Cody-Rose Clevidence

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