



DIVYA VICTOR

KITH

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FIRST CANADIAN EDITION

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John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*. 1778.

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BookThug acknowledges the land on which it operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

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# ***DROMOMANIE***

By the term ambulatory automatism [*dromomanie*] is understood a pathological syndrome appearing in the form of intermittent attacks during which the patient, carried away by an irresistible impulse, leaves his home and makes an excursion or journey justified by no reasonable motive. The attack ended, the subject unexpectedly finds himself on an unknown road or in a strange town. Swearing by all the gods never again to quit his penates, he returns home but sooner or later a new attack provokes a new escapade.

ALBERT PITRES, *Leçons cliniques sur l'hystérie et l'hypnotisme: faites à l'hôpital Saint-André de Bordeaux* (1891)

in one such case a woman was found so forcefully fornicating with her feet the soil under her that they thought she was attempting to bury her own body while standing upright. when pressed, she confessed that she had heard of travel and was attempting to push her body through to the other side of the world

— *there are many such cases*

in one such case a man so beaten by debt two wives and four girl  
children menstruating in orchestrated vengeance against the greasy  
rupees in his pocket rolled his bedding and straw mat and carried  
them out of his hut after he'd shat out his gruel and before the  
cock crowed into the cadmium sky

*— later this story was told to four girls,  
all wives, pulling straw matting and  
feathers from their cunts smelling of  
sleep and gruel— the afterbirth stamped  
and dated*

in one such case a man was promised a wall made of gold bricks  
in a land where palm trees bled almond milk and oases of honey  
pooled wherever one stood and so he took his passport out of  
the rinsed milk-bag and offered it to an agent who flew him to a  
desert and left him there where he drank his own piss and never  
returned until his wife gone bone dry in waiting married a man  
with an identical moustache years later

*— later this story was told by the  
neighbour of a policeman greased  
with Palmolive margarine and lifting  
a grinding stone above his head and  
onto a sleeping infant*

in one such case a woman embroidering the name of her fourth child into the mantelpiece tapestry was called by her husband to suckle oil from the Persian gulf in a city that clotted around an oasis where centuries ago star crossed lovers failed each other— Layla and Majnun: she dying in waiting, he walking miles and kissing every wall to know if she lived behind it— and from which she would return without her hair and with a spool of black thread to spell again

*— later this story was told to children  
in a kitchen while smoothing the ruffled  
mackerel gills and sharpening knives  
on grey slabs of granite drawn from a  
quarry where men had fallen over and  
over in love with their own destinies*



in one such case a man who wore a snake around his neck used  
a mountain as a churning rod and a serpent as a churning rope  
and curdled an ocean of milk until the mountain sank so far into  
the cream that he swam in his skirts and turned himself into a  
turtle to carry the mountain on his back miles under milk fat

*— later this story was told to two girls  
unbraiding hair slick with coconut oil  
and tied with polyester ribbons: the  
stuff of couch stuffing yacht insulation  
holograms bank notes*

in one such case a woman exchanging aluminum paise for whole mackerel was called by her father through the gardener who was sent by the scullery maid who had heard from the family's jeweller that the bloom of gold which secured the daughter's marriage to the man from the land of arrows had a heart of wax and so this woman walked backward oily pomfret scales flashing at her gold bangles and pink roe spilling to the earth until she reached the land of arrows and rent each shaft in two and returned wearing fletching in her hair like firecracker flowers— genus *crossandra*; lifecycle *perennial*

— and later there was no later

in one such case a man searching for his wife who had been held captive by a demon with ten heads and with a sword that sliced the wings of vultures built a bridge across the ocean and when he returned with her flung over his shoulder he asked that she sit in a wooden pyre on fire where she burned and burned while the three-striped palm squirrels stroked by her husband on his quest to find her flourished on fallen gooseberries and cashews

*— later this story was told to a  
classroom staring at a blackboard  
gone white with chalk guarded by  
one sentry spitting beetlenut into  
a copper spittoon and the other  
scratching an ashy elbow*

in one such case a man who had been driven off a cliff by a soldier with frayed epaulettes pulled from the linings of his pockets anti-tank missiles and anvils and muzzleloader rifles like feathers off a batshit bantam and when he faced the salty rock he finally pulled out his compass and sunk it to sea his feet fast behind him sooty feathered and on fire

*— later this story was told to a  
girlchild squatting on freshly washed  
ground her ass powdered her skirts  
ironed her two feet planted and  
floating like any other rhizome ready  
to be braised sliced and served at a  
wedding*

— later this story was told to a child by a child  
traveling away from herself

