

*poetry by Petra Kuppers*

3

**spina dorsale d'argento**

silver tongued bone sliver: sieve these notes to calmly cushion beads of cartilaginous corset. spinal snake advances through blood soil at a musical contraction, sets the skull askew. 'dolor of pad and paper weight:' anger aria on via, roseate. braced baritone bonsai twists up -- treble tone thrusts tremolo -- curtain clouds, accumulate cells and fire beyond noble metal's cap. the spark in the vocal cord corrals inwards, shivers and squishes pink disks, the diva's dress pumps ruby breath against red silk, and rips the skin that drapes those tender strands, the rigging in the house: champagne glass fracture. the nervous crowd explodes. diaphragm duration: breath sighs back.

**To Speak, Backward**

Emergency Services, it says: eye occluded, darken across the vision, and a seep in the ear:

There is sense storm  
snow sound  
heart in my ear thrums  
so eager

Mah mother,  
Arrived  
lithe  
ignite  
granite:  
narwhale

I cannot hear in this ear  
this ear  
punctured by a sea unicorn's  
horn,  
tamed by a fertile virgin  
who offers her mantle to a world  
that looks on  
bestows the spring's riches  
in the midst of winter:  
grapes swell, lice between her toes.  
Her teeth are blue beneath the white,  
hear their grind sound  
blood beats a skull out of shape.  
With each claw, it undoes

step step  
scrape

and the blood flow keeps along

grey noise blanket stillness  
a glide

The sound will cease  
none of you will hear  
my noise  
anymore

in the sea

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3

**In the Library**

*For Michael Davidson*

a square of light  
in the library, lozenge soothes  
smooth the rough fabric, parchment,  
tatters, shrouds

turn in on themselves  
I lean into a heritage, I reach  
sterility and flight: to sit here, now

to uncover the light  
in the library, darkness falls  
beneath the inkpad, spreads out  
and out and out blue jeans

a patron's touch, round, beyond,  
the heft of the volume  
roar in my hand

to turn: to listen away  
in the library, pasts the whispers  
and the urgency of my shoe  
rain smeared light, deep fall

letters walk as ghosts, one  
and one behind the glass  
her glasses refract all light

to the crease, to the gathering  
in the library, solid mind  
wanders with the water  
with the light

who is her ward, warden,  
the carnation, pressed, atomized

blinded into midday fusion

calls my number, to light  
in the library, a writer pens  
the placeholders of us that have been  
my hand on the desk

I spin against old skin  
hay to the spindle turning point  
dreidel the book

all afternoon bird drowse  
in the library, kicked back into the seat  
blue thins along the lines  
and the ink pool

the letter  
the line  
the hand held

and the rain. Rhythm of a turn  
over and over again  
waves in the palm of my hand:  
page over

I sit, light drips, my ear  
soft now, cradled in  
corrugated bandings, time

moist murmur  
ear driftwood  
gutter wash  
a square light here