

*from Grape Architect · Lou Robinson*

grape architect

I have a messenger bird called grape architect. outside is blue, blue grey. the view removes me, takes me to think. as if I could name myself grape or honeysuckle. and you would still be you. going fast into the 90s with no one to record. records come mirror flattened and disappeared. old books lie and steal. someone creeping up behind. yesterday. a year later. she can walk. first it was stand in water. new pains replace old pains, this is what passes for pleasure. then it was swim by arms. one refused to bend. one always does because one other always will. then it was small piles of sand, working always with an image of the ocean, trying not to read anything with the word dismemberment. now she walks in smooth sand. next is loose shifting sand marked for a disappearing future. she says cats every place but the first two weeks. one with a broken foot dragged a cast. the two clumping side by side. had to abandon her to her fate. this is the one whose mice ate off a head in the middle drawer from the cast of wind in the willows.

bent

Bent on a grand delusion, I started out wide. scraps came to me out of the gutters with messages like 'cat got your tongue?' and stamps of milky heron pointing right. everything came to me, sails on the lake pointed my way, mean cats curled in my lap. now here is a sad development: I discover I do not have the power to heal. so I need a new formula for greeting the dawn lit water into which I no longer plunge. Cherokee charms for winning at court: little people. from where you rest above. swiftly with your knowledge. all of you wizards. in nothing do you fail. I ask your aid in this: to see clearly, sure. but meanwhile in the rest of the dumb stuttering days to at least be bent forward falling after some grand delusion or other.

linger

It's good to find others to carry it out, some wacko version of what should have been if you had been normal, and to linger among them, but not for long. man, woman, child, short dogs, some ducks. farm with drive lined with trees, toy rabbits and monkey hung by ears from clothesline. the woman blond, wearing a pink shirt of the man's. the child wearing purple tights and plastic shoes, kicking a purple ball. occasionally drinking out of a mermaid glass with fish that swim in water she says will always be there. her skirt twirls enough. the man sometimes sits in the car at the end of the day for hours. no one knows why. he used to forage like Euell Gibbons or whatever his name was, he told me on his birthday. there was the carrot cake sitting on a sawhorse at 6 am. icing and marzipan down the front of his shirt where the horse spat it out in disgust. the woman says oh he doesn't have any feelings in that department, fortunately. we look down at the dog, both thinking at the same time of castration, and how much nicer this dog is since. he should be jealous of Steve, but he wasn't. she says I envy your privacy. to linger among them is to invite all kinds of dangerous doubts. any triangle will do this. two are too close, but three guarantee that one is always triangulated out. tonight the man is wandering around back in the field. no one knows why daddy does that, she says.

halogen

Someone takes a few steps. the light fractures through brass from 19th century India. the hum behind from faltering halogen. Mary saying eagerly is it from Elizabeth? safe conduct refused. I say I'll call but. two aging architects, or as in photo, two old cranks, claim authorship of inexplicable wheat circles of Britain. a plank and a string held in the mouth. the interior of her carriage grey green paisley. everyone wants to rule alone. one has a snake's intestine and a dog's saliva. one has a dog's stalwart heart and a snake's heart-stopping serum. not speaking to her after all this time. so many animals in one body. the woman's menagerie. the body's warring factions want you to be happy. leave the troubles of state to me.

afraid for it

Afraid for it is a test the sailboat is just in the crook of the tree which is framed by the glass door to the open porch below is the horse from under the previous porch, glued together, propped by a brick are you afraid for it? or is it a thing of beauty? does it tell you to relax on the wind or does it look like other people know how to do these things sail relax finance luxuries for a brief few summers of middle age or does it look fragile like Henry his sad sinister videos, the Lucy abandoned on the beach is it white or is it tinged with the burnt sienna of past all past summer days spoiling the present like yellowed linen immediately making you think of how hard he worked, your father, and never could buy such whiteness, so that nothing white for the rest of your life can ever stay white for long the sepia of his melancholy permeates even Henry who wants to be called Hank brought on by a sail makes you think not of white summer days wind water but of what you have lost, even if you never wanted it.

as you face

The prison of your invention. as it strikes you back and down. go in after fools and say fools' words facing across and even pay for it. joy shrinks to minutes in a circle eight in sawdust all open on one side to pouring rain and screaming field of blackbirds. around, don't throw him away, post four then through pause only to skip and change then down around post four. go home now, try. say you will breathe five times tomorrow. it's free. as you face it, it greets you through another face, not so many after all.

everything that changes us

We're never free of. nor can we remember accurately. we are vectored then everything goes on without us for a time. as we struggle to adjust. white tiny christmas lights in Carol's mother's glasses as she speaks about her son and Carol's brother. white little christmas lights in Carol's glasses as she bends her head to her drink. thinking of his Moroccan photographs of slaughtered sheep on blue mosaic. all the rest of the room is dark except for candles. brother still demanding money from afar. sometimes because he was circumcised. sometimes for the sole artistic gene he believes he carries,

more fragile than a woman's egg. pulling myself up by the spine of the couch back feels intensely good. comfort and brace. my old Mimi's davenport, wide white raised ferns against pale green silk. fever does this. things connect to things way back. things that change us disconnect. us from the web of little feverish attachments. everything that changes us is red. when doors slam open and shut on invisible flames. I'm hard to provoke. I can always send it into a private cinema of gesture. he beats the bald skull of an egg across from her and her summer skirt. I was changed before it ever happened by my fear of it.

the hooked head

Photos of heads severed from bodies mixed in with buildings in Geneva, New York, at the turn of the century. she is telling me how she got her start. how archival work led to police photography. she carries a camera everywhere in case she sees an accident. she says she happened on ours a little too late, but wondered if anyone died. she hated spending all day in dark, dirty basements. this way she gets to drive and to work with color. she hands me photos of the car, marked Obvious Total Loss.

The hooked head stares out of a photo of my scar. she hands me photos of the car and I hand her in return my best view of the scar. my dappled old red skin looking more naked than regular skin, my nearly lashless eye cast down in sorrow, my hair greased back with anxiety. the scar smiles out like a month-old baby, shiny, robust, healing quick and natural without thinking that I might want a permanent mark, something that is worth something. the hooked head stares out where the window used to be before it disintegrated silently into thousands of clear glass pebbles filling my pockets, my purse, my shoes, my undershirt, my zipper, my nose and mouth and the new mouth in the skin above my nearly invisible eyebrow. the hooked head rehearses—not out of any undue fascination but because of the weekly interrogations from various agencies—angles of vision, seconds of cognition, thought and reflex and the war between.

the present disturbances

Skating the great wide circle, drunk on gin and tonic, full of fried chicken and lemon pie my birthday in Michigan. skates from the salvation army blue fur no support. silver lake. dark rim of snow. fall flat back like a slab and my head cracks or the ice, not sure. she called last night from San Francisco. on Silver Lake she wore a white Mexican nightgown. when she turned thirty, here, a bigger, more complicated lake, I gave her navy blue satin pajamas. this is how you make a life extend out from the present disturbances. so that the movement is absorbed in widening ripples becoming finally insignificant. it will pass, she said. drink beer, she said, read mysteries.

think about it

Why do you think you like this arrangement so much? you and her and him? he says a hummingbird! maybe she has a nest up there. she says, maybe it's a him. well then maybe he still has a closet, he says. you are all on their porch eating french fries, faster.

The canter is a three-beat, asymmetrical, full of heartbreak, possibility, and flight.

She stands at the end of your lunge line wearing a garage mechanic's outfit, holding a whiskey sour and a cigarette in one hand, a whip in the other, while you ride without stirrups or reins. Don't look down, look across at where you want to be, or you could look at me, she says.