

## Jazz De Nero

### Painful Upstairs Hideout

I haven't looked at my hands in days.

The light is brilliant violence  
but I don't sleep, it's ache  
never comes anymore.

Instead I draw mazes,  
depictions of the wind.

I make lists, then I learn  
how to ignore them.

I am an expert at sidewalks  
and chemtrails.

My window body sits  
too close to the glass  
to watch the cold parades,  
a dying stampede,

people ignoring symmetry.

I am a help staircase.  
A trembling mountain  
space-chanting and twirling.

I'm a shapeless storybird  
that watches the slaughter  
take souvenirs  
with its rhythmic lottery.

I'm chased by knives  
in my day-dreams  
and my legs grow  
heavy with a fever.

Sometimes, my mother leaves  
me messages on my machine

Things like  
How are you feeding?  
Are you airtight?  
This is your mother.  
Do you remember the water?

## In My Defense

If you asked me how it feels  
I'd say, like I've grown  
eight hundred arms,  
that all need something to hold.

My loneliness is a spirit  
house displayed on my lawn.

I fill it with fruit  
offerings, tiny cups  
of orange pop  
with little straws,  
so the spirits can sip  
without falling in.

They keep saying don't give  
it a name, but my loneliness  
is a honey pot,  
atop a carnivorous plant,

It longs for strangers  
and the sea. It doesn't mind  
sleeping in the sand every night,  
if it meant something new  
would wash up every morning.

But some days you watch the sunset  
from the bluffs of the sand dunes,  
some days you barely  
leave your tent for food.

Some days your heart is heavy  
and red, a bowl full of blood,  
a basin of cow tongues.

Some days your heart is six  
chickens hanging upside  
down by their claws,  
off the baggage rack  
of a motorcycle  
going sixty miles per hour.

Some days it's covered in birch  
tree curtains, the brittle wallpaper  
peel, so easily shed.

Some days you give in,  
let him nip at your stalks  
till they're overripe stems  
till they give,  
no crisp  
snap in half  
like a warning.

## In the Museum

is a collection of human skulls.

There are 139 in total.

To help with the upkeep,  
you can adopt one  
for the low price of \$200.

All body parts are metaphors  
just as are flowers and fruit  
either saccharin or something  
soft thrown at your head,  
depending on the poem.

I can't find the word  
for slipping a ring  
off a finger,  
but that is what  
you do to me.  
All the loose objects  
shrug off.

Ask my lungs  
and lavender bruises,  
ask my soft naked rot,  
I refuse to let my heart  
be a symbol of this.  
My heart is not a ghost.  
or an eggshell,  
or the sea.  
It's not a motorcycle  
sitting in a field full of cosmos,

I have not left it  
with anyone.  
It is not across  
the world  
or the country.

It's still  
what it's always been,  
crushed earth in an oak chest,  
violets growing in my head.

\*

There *is* a small, yellow  
part of me, that wants  
to keep digging,  
a sharp little slice,  
a toenail clipping-  
size worth of wishing  
we were capable of holding  
such a wet thing.

But our liaison isn't  
buying green bananas.  
It's different shades  
of brick and vine  
beneath the nails,  
scratch-marks,

If you need a reminder  
you can always ask  
yourself,  
Out of ten, how in love  
are you  
with your sadness?

What bones  
will you leave behind  
for someone else  
to tend?