

Transducer Phosphene

Phosphene:

Jagged stars and cogs,
Moving by each other,
Under the disk inside,
The dome of her eyelids.

Transducer:

High frequency,
Submarines or foreign flesh,
Inside and under,
Subterranean echos,
Light the screen.

Gray exam table, waxy paper. “Scrunch your bottom toward edge, feet in the stirrups.” This wasn’t her first rodeo. “Relax, let your knees fall apart, deep breath.” The transducer slips in, she winces. Not her first rodeo, no walk in the park either. Looking over at the screen, the blinking light, static pulses. Transducer probes, beyond pubes, pushes against the wall of her insides. Black light, the egg shape, the curved walls of the uterus on the screen. The doctor’s voice sounds like Siri: “I am required by law to tell you that it measures six weeks three days, heart rate 129, fetal pole dimension 28, you can see the egg sac, less than ½ inch, the size of your pinky finger nail.” Merry looks at her fingernail, touches her pinkie with her thumb and looks

back to the screen. She squeezes her eyes tight, can hear her own pulse in her head. In the phosphene, an egg sac falling through the jagged stars behind her eyes. “You can clean up now” Dr Siri says. “You’re all done, that wasn’t too bad.”

Walking out of the Women’s Surgery Center, from a state-imposed ultrasound and into a twenty four hour waiting period. Blinking at the migraine sky, clear and blue. Sun shooting back up to the sky off of every windshield. Blink- phosphene. She stuffs the ultrasound printout deep into her pocket.

Impervious, concrete blankets the block, 2nd Street, past *Loans~Easy as ABC*, a pasture sized parking lot-black with white lines. Sign reads “Smile you’re on Camera. This lot under 24 hour surveillance.” She smiles hard and mean and picks up the pace.

She follows the easy slope of the sidewalk past the historical marker where the slave market had been, down to the tangle of underpass, spaghetti junction. The shadow of the concrete is cool, dark, echo.

Spit out at the edge of the Ohio; the river is out of its banks, flood stage. River Road closed. Merry hangs a right to stay in the throb and dark of the underpass, the rush of water below. The ultrasound is hard to shake. A row of park benches is underwater, just their backs rise out of the murk, so she sits on a concrete barricade. The gel from the ultrasound still wet between her legs. The sun mirrored on the water.

The Ohio River,

Pulsing back and forth in its banks;

Equal measure, sticks and plastics.

Lapping the concrete,
Hugging the center,
Rush of traffic,
Pulse in temples,
Static.

A working mom and her daughter come to water's edge, hand in hand. They are black. The mother is slim and coiffed, shiny loafers, slacks, the little girl has a nice coat, new sneakers, neat twisted hair. Both stare at the river. Merry smiles at the girl who explains the news said a dead cow was floating downtown, they came to see it. "It's all over Facebook," the mother chimes in.

Merry gamely scrambles up on the barricade, her plinth, and she, like Fisherman's Memorial bronze, uses her hand as a visor and angles her body flood-ward. Her jeans don't fit, her pudgy and bludge over their top, the hoodie sweatshirt riding up. The neat mother scans Merry. Merry scans the water: bottles, whole trees, a tent, coolers, balls but no cow. She looks to the girl and mom and shrugs. "Oh well, we better get you to school," the mother says and leads her daughter back up the bank toward a parking lot.

That, then, there. Not far from the submerged park bench, she sees it. Closer to shore than she would have thought: a brown ear, the side of the massive head, slope of neck, a great hairy black torso bobs in the brownish water next to a beach ball. Even with her glasses lost, the hulking form of the cow, rising and falling is unmistakable. The sun mirrored in the Ohio River, she squeezes her eyes tight against the light: the glowing egg. Then the dark torso of the cow floats closer among the gears, like a horrible late stage of a Rembrandt etching. Pounding

temples, Merry turns to look at the girl and mother walking away. She can't find her voice to call to them. Training her eyes on the great mass floating, she notices a rubber glove finger. No, a single teat breaks the surface of the brown water.

The water isn't deep, but it's strong. Her shoes and backpack on the bank, Merry wades toward the cow. Savoring each detail as she gets closer, the angle of the massive jaw, the hollow above, the great eye open, long lashed as a stripper's, the solemn strong forehead.

"Relax, deep breath," Merry whispers as she digs the ultrasound out of her pocket and gently inserts her fingers into the mouth of the cow. She spreads the rubbery lips and pushes the folded paper deep inside in the mucousy cavern between cheek and teeth. Resting her hand on the bony skull, she turns toward the bank. "You're all done, that wasn't too bad."
