

Oz at Night

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Contents

PART I: RECKLESS STREAK

- Let's Say... / 13
Art Lessons / 14
Upon Reading Berryman's Sonnets / 15
The Death of Stir Fry / 16
The Night Fred Lost It / 17
Suspicion / 18
Sometimes at Night / 19
There's a planetary conspiracy... / 20
Missing You / 21
Dropping You Off at the Train Station / 22
Consent / 23
Grand Canyon / 24
Fluorescence / 25
Come / 26
My Red-Brown Hair / 27

INTERLUDE

- The Nicene Creed Meets the Jabberwocky / 31
Two Poets / 32
Cups / 34
To Thomas Pynchon Regarding *The Crying of Lot 49* / 38
Running into Roy Batty and Pris at the Laundromat / 40
A Description of Kant's Categorical Imperative in a Women's
Clothing Catalogue / 41
Dear Journal, / 42
Mind of Night / 43
Jesus Was a Leo / 44

PART II: INVISIBLE THREAD

Courage /	49
Aftermath /	50
Only Imagined /	51
Philosophy /	52
The Source /	53
Stolen Identity /	54
In the Days /	55
I am not what I would like to be nor what I will become /	56
Home /	57
Raccoon /	58
This Condition /	60
Context /	61
Drinking Water /	62
Southern Nightfall /	63
Catharsis /	64
Carl Andre's <i>Equivalent V</i> /	65
Hunter Mountain /	66
Six Days /	67
What We Know /	68
Recollections /	69
Growing Up with <i>Star Wars</i> /	70
Oz at Night /	71
To Myself at Eighty /	72
Commodity Trading /	74
Will /	75

Let's Say...

Let's say the alligators one day crawled out of the sewers of New York, blindly wreaking havoc on the city, killing everyone in their paths with chilling dexterity. Or let's say aliens hovered over the city, menacing us for hours and threatening in Morse code to exterminate. Or let's say a psychic had informed you you'd be hit by a bus the next day. Or let's say an asteroid were hurling toward earth, predicted to strike New York City and mottle our atmosphere, killing the entire population. Or let's say Iran got nuclear capability and fired at Israel, so America fired back, starting World War III, and we knew a warhead was hurling toward NYC, with an hour's notice before the hit. Or let's say one of us were incurably ill, on our deathbed. What would our final thought be? Would we say it?

To Thomas Pynchon Regarding *The Crying of Lot 49*

You wrote this slim volume and then I wrote one hundred eleven pages about it in a dissertation I abandoned. One hundred eleven seemed so significant as I randomly landed there, those binary, singular numbers lined up so neatly like three straws. God damn you, Pynchon! You know, J. Kerry Grant's companion to *Lot 49* notes you use the word god thirty-three times in your novel. On purpose? Was that on purpose?! I want to punch your reclusive face. Where are you, Pynchon? So, *I'll* use the word god here three times and then *you* can decide to what extent or in what capacity I may or may not believe in such notions as purpose and entropy and preterite versus elect. By the time I was done, I had underlined and starred in color-coded markings nearly every sentence of both *Lot 49* and its companion with comments in the margins such as Irigaray? Lacan? Countercultural symptom? Commodity fetish?—always ending with a question mark. I told my advisor I'd write about all of your works, but I got obsessed with underground postal systems and Jacobean revenge tragedies, and Oedipa Maas and I? We became one and the same! I was her in the flesh, which does not refer to communion wafers metonymically, unless it does so subconsciously, which it could, I suppose. Anything's possible in your world, Pynchon. You could mean so many things couldn't you? You aren't just being cute, are you? You must mean something. What do you want to point out here, Pynchon? Why are you writing at all, Pynchon?