

Centaur

1.

Smelling manure, the humid
sharpness of rainforests
beyond his stables

and field, I got off the bus.
For three days, I'd fasted on deviled
eggs and honey, sipped

turmeric water—just following
his orders, my orthopedic
surgeon's. I'd ripped out

his ad from the back
of an almanac,
dog-eared on top of a friend's toilet:

Do You Believe In CENTAURS?

*You can rid yourself of burdensome footed legs:
Dr. D. Angel of Brazil now offering a revolutionary
surgical procedure to become a centaur. Be 0 & 1,
sleek & wise velocity. Risk-free.*

It spoke to me, as a relic
seems more holy
once taken from its locked case

and placed in one's palm.

2. Intake Form: Part D

Always felt dead
from the navel down.
Some man touched me in the crib,

warped my bones.

Never could run

like the other boys, those lithe
cheetahs flying past the dugouts,

the fence feathered with creeper.
My feet splay out like an emperor

penguin's—I will them into straightness but turn around

4 and still see fresh,
angled prints in the sand. Please

hoist my hips from my body into the heavens,

hot engine lifted
from propped-open hood . . .

Cordless,
immaculate sander,
work my ilia.

Invisible chiropractor,
tune my ischia, each grateful pubis,
shift my kneecaps inward,

nudge those two pneumatic clams

closer in the mud.

3. His Therapist's Last Notes: A Fragment

stolen from her office in Watertown, Massachusetts

marcus says he must do it he must Δ; advised him of my concerns:
1. another distraction from abuse hist. 2. issue
= sex addiction ≠ correcting phys. "deformity"
3. medically risky hygiene in Brzl?
4. centaurs are lusty (from my reading)

4. Previous Interventions

To reawaken waist to feet,
I've tried Utthita Trikonasana,
Rolfing sessions, psychedelic

meditation retreats, pure stretches
of mindfulness spiked
with extracts of Yucatán moss—

all a bunch of
New-Age baloney.
I considered binding my feet,

having the bones
of my lower
limbs broken, re-set.

6

—Too Geisha-like,
too Golgothan.
I let many men culled

from cyberspace
crush and slide into me,
choke the backs of my thighs

like chicken throats, graze
and bite, grip my arches,
but it never worked.

5.

"I want to feel alive,"

I said three times
as I rapped on the door
with the greasy horsehead knocker.

The intercom crackled.
A long tone. A nurse's voice
wavered
and gained strength:

"Sit on the cushion
in the center of the fourth stable.
Close your eyes.
Your left lid will twitch
when your animal whinnies and puffs
its arrows of
longing toward you."

6.

motes curling in barnlight
cushion really low milking stool
in middle of long corridor
fringed with fisher price toys hay
I plunked down stalls
seemed to rattle breathe as single
mammal tightly collared

promised grace wasn't shot
bow never even strung arrows
never whittled feathered
had I tapped unwitting interspecies
morse code LET NO ONE
LOVE ME choose me
soulhorse let's go home

8

Dr. Angel shook me.
Then shook my hand.
"Do not despair, Mar-quoose.
Let's be more practical.
They can be so . . .
stooooo-burn."
Rolling his eyes
far back into his head,

he whirled about,
stopping to point at Mister,
whose eyes shone
like new blacktop.
"I hear him crying
your name. He's homesick."

7. Surgery

Holding the mask
over my mouth, Dr. Angel coun ted down
in Portuguese with a Tuscan

accent, and I heard Mister
being rolled in
on a wonky cart. No doubt

he was on his side,
on a bed of dry ice,

fine Sharpie lines drawn
along his lower neck . . .

When I woke, strange
birds were grooming themselves on the window sill.
No saliva in my mouth.

I heard water running continuously.

An enormous drum of pain
persisted below my stomach, pinch,

pull, pound.
Stretch, fitful fusion, incubus-knock.

Dawn agony teething.

Days later when I first stood up,
I was a palsied crab, dazed.

Skittering, scraping.

Hot flurry of spindles
seeking ground. Ratchet, legs of

milk teeth, what moves
us on, gravity and shallow

grave. In the mirror I saw
my navel was nearly stretched down
to where my brown coat began.

Skin the color of dry pomegranate
pulsed at the suture.

I told my new body,
"You must die."

10

I began emitting more heat than ever.
Sporadically I shook.

8.

Once, only once,
I let him ride me
bareback. It was near sunset,

late, late November.
He had completed his day's work.
We were in the kitchen,

and he brushed away
a housefly from the veins
along my numb legs.

I kneeled a bit.
He relaxed into my back.
He held onto my neck,

his calves against my flanks,
and I started for the field,
what felt like an ocean.

There's a trust
that won't throw us.
He understood:

no bridle, no reins.