



julia a.k.

**+big hugs usps**

to think I have taken  
this walk before  
home to post office  
post office to home  
and have not fallen once  
while walking as I read

in this parcel,  
this waltz of limbs working,  
I imagine carrying myself  
on for eternity  
as I open each envelope  
and read the content of my life  
as I am simultaneously living it,  
and reliving it

**+this here delicate man**

his method of planting  
a handful of seeds  
is to launch by fist  
full into  
mostly compacted soil  
individual  
threads of life  
he steps on top of them  
to secure their stay  
steel toed boots  
with untied laces

the lawn grows  
despite rugged invitation  
his green sea of success  
a reflective surface  
to gaze upon  
his own  
brilliance  
staring right  
back at him  
just outside  
his window

if each seed had been kissed  
before individual  
pinched placement,  
a soft pressing  
into loose ground  
blessed in place  
by gentle touch  
with barefoot  
well intention  
No one could say  
for sure  
that the grass  
would be greener

germination is not personal  
emotionally it is unbranded  
their seed bodies  
unaware of anything  
beyond how  
they are placed  
that one time

they sit  
without forecast  
or expectation  
of how their life should be  
and what the world  
will offer  
them

## **+I leave you**

a bowl of water  
in the event you come home thirsty  
when the moon is high  
and outside there is someone  
that needs it more  
than you do  
and is also more likely to stop by

I sit at the window,  
fogged and smudged  
it is difficult  
to reach every corner of a home  
that is in a constant state of molting.  
*Chicago is very dusty.*  
she observes the accumulation of particles  
to be greater here than where she lived before  
I can't comprehend how it is measured  
and so I say nothing in return

the moon wanes and waxes  
I keep the bowl out  
a stagnant fountain  
to observe  
no current  
waves  
or ripples  
the 1/4-inch layer of soot  
tide unpredicted

the surface of the water  
tells me **a lot** about time  
and the quality of the air  
the dust still  
composed of pieces of you  
even after  
you have left.

**+bait;**

like my breast floating  
in a bath  
wish it hung so  
light  
like an ocean buoy  
guarding a lobster body  
an underground trap  
sealed shut  
a small opening  
feeding anyone  
but the lobster

## +conference calls in the lecture room

the individuals in the room are discussing  
the complexity of the human hand  
and the brain's ability to make sense  
of low resolution video  
the goal is to train  
a computer like a dog  
to recognize a hand

the discussant is considering  
the complexity of the task of recognition;  
the ability to perceive an object  
with accuracy  
despite its orientation, size  
luminance  
we are good at it.

he argues  
in the defense of computers  
that hands are more sophisticated  
than the human face—  
less homogenous  
“they are without consistency”  
and he doesn't say much more  
but we absorb  
his sureness

a sign language interpreter,  
sits stage right  
weaving a narrative blanket  
through three-  
dimensional space  
I scan her hands  
and then my own  
and then his.  
it is then that I notice  
he is missing the middle finger  
on his right hand.  
it is then that I realize  
that the audience relies on her  
to have ten fingers.

our attention is certainly on hands,  
that much I understand  
but if not on the hands in the room,  
then whose?  
we talk about them  
as if they are separate organisms,  
accoutrement, a gun,  
something attached and also separate;

something we borrow and wear  
at the same time.

the audience relies on her to have ten fingers,  
and we rely on him for  
?



**+the chute of life is good**

I don't feel jealousy often  
but when I see construction  
happening on the 8th floor of a building,  
the large yellow slide  
connecting the window to the sidewalk  
way down below,  
I do experience something similar to jealousy.  
someone without any connection  
to the items that they are hurling down a chute  
into a receptacle another man,  
without connection,  
will drag away  
somewhere unrelated and far away,  
I do feel jealousy.  
for the fall those items feel,  
for the joy of the push,  
and for the man  
who gets to drive off  
without a care

## **+two backs, two back bones**

my sister has had a birthmark  
for as long as I can remember.  
south of her spine  
the shape of a light leak,  
indented  
like the braille on the elevator button  
that you touch  
as you travel to the upper floor  
of your apartment building.

I was born with a birthmark as well  
a shade of pink  
flesh with my skin  
visual by sight only  
a kiss the size of my adult lips

in my mind,  
and I say that because I've never discussed this  
out loud with my sister,  
we were stamped with the same ink  
when I locked eyes with the home  
her birthmark made on her back,  
less pink each year,  
I felt a warmth,  
similar to looking in a mirror after a fresh haircut,  
experiencing  
for your own physical form

it wasn't until I moved  
into a 100-year-old apartment in Chicago  
that I noticed the shape  
was printed in my mind like a watermark.  
standing in the shower,  
in the textured glass that protected  
my naked body  
**from the gaze of those walking on the street.**  
a repeating pattern, an abstract shape  
coin-sized, also indented  
three dimensional, hand-made,  
I raised my palm  
to touch the glass  
already sure of the texture  
before I made contact.

in the sand feet in front of me,  
burned due to negligence,  
she gazed upon the shore,  
i hoped that she would live forever  
and that as we aged,

we would know exactly where on each other's flesh  
once lived a shape we both shared,  
before they were absorbed by our bodies  
and became a shared secret that lived  
underneath our skin.

**+well rounded diet**

vitamins &  
herbal  
remedies;  
I don't believe  
they work.  
but on a shit day  
I take  
a handful  
I call  
on the  
expired  
audience  
of supplements  
that sit in the stadium  
living behind  
my bathroom mirror  
their diverse bodies  
coated  
capsules  
men's multi  
poor man's T    <<consider opening with this  
liquid kelp  
a trip to the sea

I close my eyes  
and try to believe  
in their ability  
to work  
if taken  
consistently  
which I'll hold  
up for a month  
maybe two  
before ultimately  
I remember  
it's not worth  
my time or  
money

## +man talking

### I.

the man repeats,  
“girl, stay”  
at least two dozen times,  
as he attempts to command his dog  
who is leashed

to my ears out of context  
his words echo and transform into a mantra,  
slow and rhythmic,  
as the portal to his world opens for me  
much larger than the section of grass in which he sits,  
allowing me to imagine the many girls—  
the ones he has asked to leave  
and the many girls he has begged to stay

### II.

waiting on the corner of 7th ave and 32nd street,  
I hear a man standing alone,  
about ten feet away from me,  
project his voice  
like a cannon  
“I have no idea what I’m doing in New York City.”  
and I feel comfort in my bones  
for the first time in a while.

the cicadas  
sing their summer  
screams  
they compete  
in the art of speaking  
over one another  
as I try  
and fail  
to remember  
In what direction the sun rises  
or sets for that matter  
making it hard to  
indicate where the fuck I am  
but only remembering how little I know  
when asked

**+fruit stripe**

his diet  
consisting of sugar-free gum  
and sugar-free energy drinks  
that he buys while the car  
he's left  
unattended  
sucks up  
the \$4.67  
a gallon  
after gallon

back in the car  
he unwraps  
and uncaps  
makes his way home  
to the static of AM radio  
fluctuating voltages  
of taurine and spearmint

watching baseball  
third inning  
he slaps  
his chew  
underneath the coffee table  
his woolgathering  
uninterrupted by  
the fine motor skills  
required in  
this thoughtless moment

the gum joins the conglomerate,  
underneath  
the putrid hall of spit  
delicately outlined  
multicolored  
hedge stones  
marked by his  
disinterest  
his carelessness

the older pieces  
give the new member  
an acknowledging look  
and they feel seen  
in their depleted  
tasteless body  
for the first time

in a while

all stashed  
under the communal table  
collecting the sounds of the  
communal space  
the earth's crust  
or whatever layer exists underneath it  
(in this instance  
the underside of the pressure-  
treated wood)  
just above the sweat-filled carpet  
he never cared  
to move the table  
when vacuuming

their contorted  
shapes  
their edges altered  
left hanging  
resigned from former  
positions of importance  
a crowd of near misses  
empty words  
emptied mouth

the inning is over  
Ah....  
the refreshing taste of a  
new stick of gum

## **+airfare cinema**

I don't turn off the music  
entering both of my ears via headphones  
as the flight attendants stand in the aisle  
telling us what to do if we lose oxygen  
or if we were to crash into a body of water.  
I look up  
but only to watch the choreography they do.  
You know, that dance,  
the synchronized points and waves  
the pulling of strings  
the buckling of a disembodied seatbelt.  
they are the airline's marionettes  
angels that do not work for the sky  
they just know how it works  
and what to do when it doesn't.  
their performance comes to an end.

I know at one point they will remind us  
to help ourselves before helping others  
I have to wonder what memory enters each of their minds  
when they repeat this advice day in and day out.  
who in their life simply takes too much  
who takes and takes from the women  
ripping the wings off their backs  
while the women imagine that one day  
when they will get all they have given, handed back to them  
as they recline in a teal plastic lawn chair,  
holding a lemonade with a pink umbrella and two ice cubes,  
as men fan them with large palm tree fronds.  
that is, if they don't go down in a plane  
before that big day of reimbursement comes  
if the sky works until then

Amy Winehouse sings  
as I drift off into a sky of my own  
where I take a seat and stare  
into a mirror that rests at the bottom  
of a shallow pond  
and she stares back at me  
and mouths,  
"so tired,  
I'm so damn tired"



**+botulinum**

she was not a doctor  
but she had absorbed a lot of information  
both in passing and in seminars.  
she knew it well.  
she could regurgitate the ingredients and subtleties of each medication;  
chemically and functionally  
I am confident that if this was not her access to income,  
her access to a state of mind that during a good quarter,  
allowed her to buy her kids  
that one special thing,  
she would not have chosen to fill her finite brain with such content.

being her child,  
I grew up with a heightened awareness of my skin;  
its immortality, its senescence, its beauty.  
I learned in great detail  
how my youthful face would age  
and sag  
and how each feature  
could be a future investment  
if I so desired a cosmetic route,  
if I should choose to not let my skin fold  
and melt at its own pace,  
I could purchase my older face injections  
I could see a surgeon  
and they would tell me  
they loved my mother dearly  
as they touched the skin on my face.

+I

I am passing myself around like a football  
across a turf field of casualness,  
as In I don't believe that we fall in love  
for any other reason  
than comfort and convenience  
and to be caught.  
and when I look around  
I realize the crowd is made up  
of all these connections  
that have happened accidentally-  
sometimes I place peppermint oil  
next to a puddle of ants  
just to see how they  
rush around —  
their pheromone trail  
disturbed, dispersed  
the red checkered background  
they've never actually seen  
but daydream about  
no fate in the end zone  
we are all suspended in air  
making incidental connections  
and nothing more complex  
than that.

**+flow agent**

the purchase of a bird  
perpetually positioned  
within bars  
without warning  
clipped wings  
to suit her  
incongruous crypt  
in which she is perched

withering  
within  
her own mind  
she will sing  
but only when  
she knows  
she won't be heard

her hereditary heath  
imagined within the nape  
of her bird neck  
she waits  
endlessly

**+30-year-old man elects to have a flip phone and is part of a cool Chicago noise band!**

what makes writing about you difficult  
is that you do not stand out  
what I know  
is that you are human.  
you are made of shapes,  
an oval for a head  
a triangular torso  
rectangle legs.  
you wear red  
you do not say much  
you hold two drum sticks  
your boyish figure  
passively upright  
it is obvious  
you do not know  
how to be tall

I know little beyond  
the impression that he is man  
speaks softly to manipulate others  
calls you by your name  
during each interaction  
and with such minimal effort  
you become unconsciously convinced  
that you're special to him

he's all gongs  
and snares  
and stares  
lanky  
Yamaha ass  
bitch

**+flat**

my car  
now one thousand dollars more of a car  
than it was before I paid someone to fix it

my bike  
one dollar more of a bike than  
before we filled up my bike tires today  
and you paid for it  
so I could ride out  
on what more closely resembles  
bricks

after a long day  
when neither air is free  
but the ride gets smoother  
thanks to that seasonal leak

Every so often I hear someone say something and it causes me to think;  
That's a poem. That's what love is. Someone writing a poem about their own life, without even realizing it.

This collection of poetry is a showcase of the people whose voices have made their way inside-out of mine. Entangled in their own complexities, for better and for worse, they have come through me here in this format. Taking up bandwidth, planting their seeds, frozen in time; I imagine each poem as a hedgestone of thought. To the cast and crew, this one's for you.

cover includes images from  
signwriting; signpuddle; — a system of writing american sign language

julia a.k. - chicago resident, new york born, queer, 5'1", loose cannon

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