

## Jason Fraley

### Progress in Interfaith Relationships

Post-honeymoon postcard from the priest: *may I help you become one flesh?*

As scheduled, we arrive at the flooded viaduct at 5 am.

Instead of the priest, a witch doctor.

In return for three of my vertebrae, he offers us a two karat solitaire.

Your finger already adorned, I have him implant it in my left palm.

His cane fashioned from coral just as I begin to slump.

No incisions, no blood.

In midair, the bones morph into a cherub, a crow, and a squirrel.

The squirrel immediately drowns as the crow perches, caws *communion*.

The cherub floats upward, glancing back at three-second intervals.

I remember the luxury resort, the aviary that did not appear to have a ceiling.

*from Transmission*

**Not Necessarily a Way Out**

Undulating labyrinth. Graduated hedges. An absence of right angles. Trash bags brim with clippings. Sham constellations. My rigid posture notwithstanding.

I fell in love with my conception of the sexton. His hourly announcement of direction. Until the vegetarian minotaur axed the rope. The bell shatters into a collection of dented ornaments. Pews as handbarrows. A row of unearthed turnips.

At my feet, evidence that trees rust. My residual memory from meteorological school is that fire season was forthcoming. Half a map neither useless nor useful. If fire, I will stitch it to my chest.

An infestation reincarnates as smoke. Empty thermos as collection tray. Ear against metal, I listen for the tower to (re)sound.

## **Commentary: A Day in the Life of**

- (9) It is another thing to keep driving through the radio's static convocations.
- (2) Blood and caffeine: an imprecise ratio.
- (14) Mass of tourists in the lobby.
- (4) [Anticipation.]
- (6) Cold wind exfoliation.
- (3) Dysfunctional mirrors and picture frames.
- (5) It is one thing to willingly relive the same day.
- (10) [Increasing anticipation.]
- (16) The broken elevator is still the only way up.
- (1) A thousand cellular insurrections.
- (7) Crystalline lawns.
- (12) Lights (not sun) were left on to impress.
- (15) [Climax: anticipation.]
- (13) Fractured ankle or worn sole?
- (8) World through cataract veneer.
- (11) Your spot in a contemporary labyrinth.

## **Inventor of This Room**

Angles melt. If flatness, then what about gravity? Remember the pin-pricked parachute? Like that – kinetic energy waiting for another rip, for the ground to resume its role as a grinding agent. Just as things are now.

Outside, a good Samaritan with a handsaw. Thirty days of dust storms have stained, softened the outside so it no longer appears concrete. The arrival of mimes born without depth-perception. The troubadour rhythm of their hands. Their false-start heartbeat when I slam three bags of cement mix to the ground.

A way out would be nice. Passersby mangle my calls: drillers, not millers! At least I will have plenty to drink upon my arrival. Higher on my list of necessities, though, is a door. Which can act as an organic painting. Which, if well oiled, can act as a manual fan, especially on stifling days. Which can act as a window just in case I decide to stay.