

SAMPLER

Flightless Bird

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Rosemarie Corlett

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'Karen Carpenter on Drums in the Azaleas'. *IOTA – The Outsider* (Templar Press, 2018)

'Preparing Game Bird – Notes to Self'. *Thief* (Tribe Media, 2016)

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Preparing Game Bird – Notes to Self

mix sugar, syrup and bicarb in a deep saucepan

while she bubbles, shrink a good tree (if you don't have a whole tree, the bonsai's fine)

cover the shrunken tree with slabs of the hot toffee mixture {as though making

leave to cool

Papier-mâché

carefully remove the branches from inside the cinder toffee casing

when the honeycomb frame feels weightless in your palm, you know you have the skeleton *

for the feathers:

julienne a bridal veil then iron out the splay with starch

break off a high heel for the centre spine of each plume

have a friend play a continuous tremolo on the violin to get everyone in the mood for flight

if you run out of wedding train, flatten a pompon and comb out its threads

hook the barbs with corset eyelets to resist the wind- ruffle

next, assemble:

— any pocket you ever kept conkers in

— a burnt out lightbulb

— the envelope from a letter you still keep in its envelope

— a heart shaped balloon

4 CHAMBERS

OF

THE HEART

cover your hands in bitter, dark marmalade
wind up angel hair pasta like a ball of yarn to make the brain
place it against the keyhole on a windy day so she starts to get a taste for breeze

make the legs
lock the legs
(so that it doesn't fall off a branch when sleeping)

get up early, go outside and hold her
good
make it last before it goes
then hold her up into the half light

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* if it's still any heavier than a box of matches, fill it with sound absorbed by books
until it begins to coast a little on your skin

Karen Carpenter on Drums in the Azaleas

Your body is the half-second before thunder
when air is cleaned.

Without its breath-cushion
the outside world is binned electrics and unpredictable lasers
planted in the ground
over time.

and unsustainable

but you weave the sediment poles
and master your sticks
like a slalom skier.

And you can get to the core of the earth

even in a small garden.

When you get to the very centre
(which can be anywhere)
you surprise a wild animal there –

It's itchy

it's rude and brief and for me it's a bird but it's only
the wildness that's important.

A circus poet once told me that the thing she loves most about birds is that they're
constantly in their essence. So listen,

I want you to know,
you hit that for me.

And I know it's real

because your drums spread through the garden like blood moves through snow.

The beats got right in
the interstices of the crazy paving,

seeped into the wood of the bench,
filled the garden gnome's eyes,
coloured the contents of the water butt so rain came out pink.

It felt like a bouncy castle inflating around me,

and the moon,
breathless,
blew it up

through a telescopic straw – an unseen aliveness –
like when roses relax overnight.

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Paper Bird

There is a moment
in the folds
when the paper torso resembles a cut diamond,
or a gutted pig.

From here I bend the sides
like breaking buffalo wings
and cave in the neck with my thumb
to make a reverse
face.

Once assembled, the body
is a live riddle. I hope

that someone robs a bank
in the time it takes to make this bird.

Time speeds up
when you build a flightless afternoon. My thief
sweats —

the soft hair on the skin of his heart.

Closing his hand
around hunks of soft banknotes cut

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like hair –
from the safe to the bag to the car.

Don't move,
he says. Hard to say why it's delicious
except to mention that my friend Emma
touched down on the same mood once:

*Flew to Vietnam to have sex in a parked car
with a man I met online,*

the postcard read. She met him there
in that place where *don't move* means *move*,
a little.

Crime
is a paper bird.

I hang it with cotton string and watch it slowly spin. I'm reminded of a story
where children thought a rabbit
they dug up was alive
because it moved around in water. Their teacher
placed a stick in the stream to teach them something.