BLOOD NATIVITY:

POEMS

by

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A THESIS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, Dawn, Tony, Cindy, & Whitney Pinho.
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An earlier version of “Five Pieces” originally appeared in Word Riot (April, 2008).

Some of the language in this manuscript comes from other sources. I’ve listed them here:

“[G]od is a place you will wait for the rest of your life” in the poem “Blood’s Parents Choose Adoption” is from Neutral Milk Hotel’s song, “Two-Headed Boy, Pt. 2.”

“The lord has decreed disaster / for you” in the poem “Blood is Swaddled in the Maternity Ward” is a direct quote from the Book of Kings.

“… is become death, the destroyer of worlds” in the poem “[Kirk Pinho is everything seen & unseen…]” is largely attributed to Robert Oppenheimer.

“Just because you’re afraid of the dark doesn’t mean that it’s frightened of you” in the poem “[Kirk Pinho pretends to know the answer…]” is from Every Time I Die’s song “Organ Grinder.” The strategy behind the repeated “You are an orphan” portion of that poem was adapted from Tracy K. Smith’s poem, “History.”
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It was a defining moment
& that was part of the problem—
The way a thing defined
naturally resists
whatever it means to mean.

—Matthew Guenette

I almost had myself convinced
that I meant everything
I said. What a shame.

—Every Time I Die
PART ONE
Dear reader,

I am the debris. I am Shiva, the God of Death. I am Tartarus. I am Erebus. I am Belial. I am who & what I say I am. I am Blood. I am the fist wrapped in blood. I am Eros. I am Priapus. I am the snake oil sold to the passersby. I am the smell of baked pumpkin seeds. I am every tablespoon of shame you felt when your mother caught you with your hand around your cock or those two fingers in your cunt. I am Thanatos. I am Bia.

I am. I am. I am. You are not.
Dear reader,

Let’s go back to just after the beginning of the universe, when we were nothing but cosmic chalk dust. Asteroids chasing their baby blue tails. Making infant fists. Gases salivating in the anti-matter. Back to long before the mud choir, incandescence on their slack skin, sang *Hallelujah, Hallelujah, & Hallelujah*. Back to before Barrabas told me, his teeth routed into flutes of stalagmites, *Blood, you’re one lucky son of a bitch*. If you call, I’ll come to get you in a jiffy.
Dear reader,

This world is not a game. It is not like shooting pinochle with your grandparents & mother on a Sunday afternoon. We are not memory. This is not now; this is me saying, Not now. This is the brutality of now. This is me asking you to show your face. This is me demanding your name. This is me saying that the world exists in the negative. This is the canticle I’d like you to recite when you praise my name: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel—blah, blah, blah, something that can never be written or known.
Dear reader,

The black dog scrapes crabgrass like a blanket on her shit. The fence moans in angry wind. Divides us. Sedans scream eastward towards the city. She is burying her scent so others can’t find her. Do you see the madness we’ve created? Something so willing to hide itself in the name of safety? Her eyes are on the side of her head. Doom’s eyes look forward.
Dear reader,

Thousands of years ago, every bird swarmed as I stepped rakishly, Spaniard-like, off a plank into the sea. The brackish sanitarium. Isaac & Ishmael were still brothers back then, before the last war of the world. The water molecules breathed down my throat for me. Tried to resuscitate me. Told me, *We never meant to hurt you. We are sorry. We warned you.* Death found something succulent to drag to its grave.
Dear reader,

I am wrapped in your warm & wet bed sheets. You are Lot’s daughters with wine & cable-knit hair. You are Delilah with one breast exposed. You are Herodias & Salome raising John the Baptist’s head on a disc of tin. Jezebel toasts to you & then throws you out a window. But I’ve missed you like pipe bombs, my darlings. You’ve embargoed my happiness, but I still open my mouth as you drip through the colander.
PART TWO
BLOOD’S MOTHER ADDRESSES HER WOMB

welcome blood humanity will welcome you
to our magnificent world
of blood
& we will love you & worship you & praise you
promise like blood should be loved & worshipped & praised

your brains of blood
my dear beautiful blood baby

(blood you’re inside me
blood you’re inside me
all wistful
come out wet & wailing like a radiator—)

the temperature of blood is absolute zero
your knuckles & fingernails & nightfall of blood I cherish

your blood

my dear blood
you have weaponized my womb
your mouth big as a hand grenade

oh lord what will the world think of us now
when no new prayer book is written for us
    evict the fat rats from the nave

    in the name of the father
    the blood & our bloody spirit

    amen

everyone pray with us now
    pray for us all
    pray for snow
    pray for nowhere
    or nothing

the name of blood
is unknown is poly-vocal is poly-tongued is screaming

DEAREST BLOOD WHAT IS YOUR REAL NAME
    DEAREST BLOOD WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON

but blood is a name
& a name is a name
    an invisible tattoo
    an eye to the world

in my dreams blood you become a séance a gregorian chant
in your future
    your sunburn will be a blanket
a lampshade of blood
bye bye lamplight
this world will have little use for you anymore

everything in this world is tails up
  the HIV test  the farmer’s market full of blood-colored plums

mozart chopin haydn  blares through my shirt
  into you

  the violins swell like a cyst
  the cellos hum
  the treble clef of knowledge

blood did i ever mention to you
  that i once found a fraction of my past

hog-tied in the corner
  a rope in her mouth  gagged
  she was trying to spit out please please i am with child
    & i said me too

so i untied her
  holstered my .45
    stuck the pin back in the grenade
  & said scram  am i not merciful

blood i hope you will appear unscarred
  in family photos
blood i hope you will keep us in your thoughts
BLOOD’S PARENTS CHOOSE ADOPTION

the weight of his messiah-hood
the smell of lamb blood
the splinters in the lamb blood

blood’s eyes are meat

for crows
for crows
we will anchor blood’s childhood to a fencepost
throw rocks at its little head in the blonde sand
tie ropes to its limbs & strap them to horses

DARLING
DARLING
this is not
a catechism
this is not
an offering
this is not
redemption
or baptism

so what next cries a little girl

all the little things held grudges against us
your father & i

but we hold no grudge

against you

blood

or against crows
nature gets license for everything

blood i promise you will be a human currency

we’ve got some nerve
  we’ve got some late breaking news from inside your brain
    saying let me stay

we’ve got some late breaking news from this body of mine
  saying i’m sorry my darling

blood you will trill your way from this body of mine

all daedal
  champing at the bit

  oh catacomb of my loss
  oh my womb a bomb shelter
  oh my fiction of a life

but blood you will always find a way
  & god is a place you will wait for the rest of your life
BLOOD’S CAESAREAN BIRTH

gurney gurney gurney
the jackleg doctors shout
BREECH BABY
your legs curl into corkscrews
in my womb

blood you’ve run your laps in my head
nobody said this would be easy
this excavation of body
this body being razed

just breathe a couple more deep breaths mary

like SCUD missiles

last call for your last drink
of amniotic fluid darling
last call for my last bit of blame
as this body unzips

you’re on your own

it’s not science or obstetrics
it’s the grinning scar blooming across my stomach

blood they told me you were born with a semi-automatic in your hand
blood they told me you were already preparing for the end of the world
BLOOD IS SWADDLED IN THE MATERNITY WARD

& three men in scrubs approach
  the lamp-heated crib
  with gifts of silver
  nitrate dropped in blood’s eyes
  a clamp for the umbilical stump
  an infusion of factor viii

  then it’s done  that’s it  & the magi scatter like spores

while thinking  the lord has decreed disaster
  for you

  & blood’s mother is sedated in the ICU  hypnogogic
  sleeping like dirt

  dearest blood what will you go home to  she dreams

  dearest blood your future is written in parchment

  your future is written in Elysium
BLOOD STEPS ON A PIECE OF BROKEN GLASS

skipping down the orphanage sidewalk
at age six
blood wails like a zipping bullet
won’t stop bleeding

& the nurse shouts at him what’s wrong
as he’s underneath the river
birch tree

& you don’t see other boys crying
over a little boo-boo
or over a little blood do you

he points to the cut
a wedge of watermelon carved into the arch of his foot
the flapping flag of skin
the blood made little rorschach tests on the concrete

blood thinks the first one is heaven
another is a hospital bed
another is his mother’s
floral nightgown folded in the corner
another is a palmful of ashes
another is blood
BLOOD’S BIRTHDAY PARTY

on a seven-branched candelabrum

on a seven-branched candelabrum dug into chocolate cake

blood resists wishing he knew

where death lays its hooded head at night

(\textit{the walk-in closet}

\textit{the dishwasher}

\textit{the two-car garage})

so instead

he wishes for regime change

in jerusalem or haifa or pyongyang

in sana’a or detroit or moscow

& everyone asks what he wished for

\textit{the wish won’t come true}

\textit{if i tell you}

on a seven-branched candelabrum dug into birthday cake

blood wishes for 26 more years

the other orphans clap like an abscess

the other orphans hold handfuls of narcissus
BLOOD FLIPS THROUGH A PORNO MAGAZINE

*all good men stand on the edge*  
*of ablution*  
*ab ovo*

*all good men stand on the edge*  
*of redemption*  
*ab ovo*

blood thinks  
in his new family’s home

as he secedes from a state  
of grace

the beagles groan in the room blood hasn’t explored
the porch light fries the moths
the encyclopedias reminisce about the world
they quote blood
the flatware downstairs says  
*take us away*

at 15 his lips have no lips  
no body to kiss
under the backyard gazebo
in milky moonlight

his hands have no body

no body to roll up with

on the wet grass

oh the loneliness of his hands

which flip through the gloss of a *playboy*
between the model’s legs a pink calla lily
rose petals covering her nipples

his sex flat-lined then resuscitated

as his hand rekindles a friendship
& his eyes roll upward

and as Kirk Pinho like a wolf at him

blood stares back

milks

this time with daddy

& thinks this is what a body does

&

the body stopped being a miracle long ago
BLOOD’S JUNIOR PROM

blood asks oxygen to the dance

& sure why not

so they do-si-do

they learn to waltz

ONE TWO THREE    ONE TWO THREE    ONE TWO THREE    ONE TWO THREE

sequined dress twirling above her knees

like a parasol

his black tux with red shirt

the boutonnière he pinned to her

thick breast

pictures snapped

by the terra cotta masonry

they bump and grind at the dance so close

that zeno would have smiled wide as a dump truck

but oxygen doesn’t put out

blood feels hoodwinked

so he finds a new partner a new bedfellow

oh bad parts of blood

oh bad judgment

of blood
blood can still smell memory on carbon monoxide’s breath

the periphrasis of seduction
   the contraband whiskey flask
       the strobe
           the slow dance

& blood does choreography with his thumb and middle finger
   in her panties
       has a thumb war
           in her womanhood

on the dance floor

twiddles with her pubic hair
   black
       & like a scrubbie

next to the trash compactor
   in the thick dark of may
   blood breaks her open like a vending machine

she dispenses no coins
BLOOD’S INHERITANCE

twenty &

blood lights the cinnamon candle that sits

at the corner of his end table

in the one bedroom apartment

a glass of whiskey neat

puts a knife over the flame

the dull side to his bicep

brings a cross into the flaxen skin

(the body’s tapestry

the artisanship of god)

stares at the check on the kitchen counter

hyperventilates to control pain

(SHHH SHHH SHHH)

with an awl

blood scrapes mother

in convex calligraphy

around the bottom of the bisecting burns

where the feet went
where the metatarsals got married in wood & nail

the nails whose angry mouths

spat rust into the sand of golgotha

the rust
the flesh scent
the eyes of pilate

_i know my past_ blood thinks
as he bandages his arm

_i know how to spell pity_
BLOOD’S NIGHT OUT

blood gets absolutely rip shit one thursday
mistakes the bar for a confession booth

(forgive me father
i have sinned
i have found solace in a hospital bed
my munchausen by proxy)

fixes his gaussian vision
on some willowy brunette

stumbles towards her away from his friends

blood is a silhouette
walks like a pinball through a net of smoke

the beer bottle to her lips she forms an oval with her mouth
at him from across the bar
winks makes a duck face
blows
a smoke ring

her star
of david
tattoo peeking over her belt loops
her pointer finger curling at him like a worm
haunt me

blood thinks

in the morning

buy me a drink

the brunette says

what is your name

my name

blood wonders my real name

blood borrows her saliva

swishes it around in his mouth

turns it into a whiskey shot

which she quaffs all ho-hum like

as blood removes his credit card

from the condensation on the rail

he asks her

what do you think
BLOOD’S VEHICULAR MANSLAUGHTER

as if it did blood any good to have hope

for the co-worker he sent flying

through his sedan windshield after

he slammed undercarriage-first

(spinning like a yo-yo)

into a sycamore tree

the radio wires tickled the bark

her blood bothered the concrete

her blood bothered the concrete

her blood bothered the concrete

the concrete said *quit dripping on me*

the concrete said *make it brief*

the concrete said *welcome home*

she gasped for air like a goldfish

blood pooling in her mouth

her death was a bypass
to death

the asphalt was everywhere

the surveillance tape said *holy shit*
BLOOD’S SUMMER FLING

& the crickets chirrup outside
  & the katydid octaves make earfall
so blood is happy
  to be blood
    one balmy and cool september

as she kisses him like a piranha
as their tongues braid
  (SHH the munchkins can hear us)

as she curls up like a dandelion on the couch
as she says one evening
  i promise you’re safe
  i promise i’ll keep you safe
    here in the basement
    my handsome hemophiliac

as her eyes open quick as parachutes
  the next morning at the MER MER MER
    of the alarm clock

groggy blood trips over a tonka truck on the stairs
bashes his nose on the banister
  begins spurting liquid rubies
    makes zombie noises at the kids
      while walking through the house
his arms outstretched like two-by-fours

    run run i’m already dead    munchkins
    don’t let me catch you munchkins

& they laugh like three little bottle rockets

    no hospital
    just a bucket will do
    alcohol    a needle    some thread

so a bucket it is already filled with mop water

    as blood curls over it
    leaking like a brake line

    & she snaps

& jimmies the bone back

    the bone hard as a tectonic plate

but blood sycophantic blood will soon be

    the wormed apple
    of her eye

blood sycophantic blood is not ambrosia

    will not grovel
    to make things last
    forever
BLOOD’S END OF THE WORLD “TO-DO” LIST

With a line adapted from Agha Shahid Ali

Blood will pluck the sapphires from sky when he is king.
Blood will withhold judgment from lye when he is king.

Lye can’t control the bodies it decimates.
Lye can’t control the bodies it decimates.
His body. His body. Oh, when he is king.

Courtesy: All the archangels—*their wings frozen*—will fall tonight.
Blood will shear the horns of the morning star—*die*—when he is king.

At the end of the world, Blood may be a broken manual transmission.
Blood will ornament with dust the frozen wings of dragon flies when he is king.

Blood split himself in half with every hearse sputtering by your house.
Remember that Blood will meet you between your thighs when he is king.

Blood cares for you, darling.
Blood cares for you, darling.
Blood cares. Blood cares. Oh, when he is king.

Blood was not meant to last short like a fall guy when he was king.
To all the churches Blood was divisible by when he was king:

He has come. He has come. He has come.
BLOOD WALKS THROUGH THE PARK

& virgins begin following him
    & midshipmen begin following him
        & stockbrokers begin following him
            & refugees begin following him

    & so it begins
& the tsetse flies begin following him
    & the elm trees begin following him
        & the crabgrass begins following him
            & worker bees begin following him

    & he 180s on the gazebo
& faces his congregants a park-full of breath

& says through his bullhorn
    my name is blood
    the son of the one true god
are you ready to accept me he asks arms in a V above him

& they say
    we are lost
    we are lost
    we are lost
    take us home
BLOOD’S CLOSING ARGUMENT

All you god-fisted lost ones here in this park have been lost for so long. I am the one from so long ago, yet not so long ago, when you were just one of the world’s many dry heaves—& now you’re here. This park. Those dogs yipping. That sandbox, those monkey bars. You need someone to guide you through the stink. & this is now, not the cloudy urgency of now. This is me saying, Now. Now, you have someone listening to your conversations through a jar pressed against a door. Follow me, lost ones. I know the way out. Believe me. I care.
BLOOD’S COMPOUND IN THE JUNGLE

its smell of grapefruit juice
    its heat like a miracle & a muscle
        its bodies like bodies
            its bodies like bodies

    its bodies shaped into a garden of bodies

tell him about that
    so he might remember
        all those heads filled with sweetness

    when he leaves
        when he breaks
BLOOD GETS IN A SHOOTOUT WITH POLICE

& blood blasts
  & blood blasts
    & blood blasts
      his way through a blindfold
                      of blue & blasphemy & squawk-box blabber

  where the jays are bellowing an aria
  & the sirens are screaming an atonal melody

bone shatters into more bone
  brains shatter into belief
    & the bullets run out

  ballistics tests reveal .45
BLOOD’S REDEMPTION

from blood’s abandonment in the maternity ward 33 years ago
to blood’s summer fling

with the single mother

speak Bengali to me my sweetheart
my short & black-haired darling
make that tongue roll atomically
the T’s turning into Th’s

from blood’s dick stiffening into a bulb
to the benders & blood’s minor ministry

blood can’t remember who you are
(blame it on whomever or whatever you want)

blood can’t remember who he is
(blame it on whomever or whatever you want)

blood can’t keep a straight face
while unfurling his death bed air mattress
inflating
deflating
inflating again

oh blood laughs like rain

blood could make it rain

but blood picks the lock to the afterlife
blood makes himself at home

in the afterlife

in the hospital waiting room

an employee says

everyone please welcome blood
to the hospital waiting room

blood are you ready

blood congratulates himself
coagulates into diluted little blood babies
& standing near an incinerator
blood earns new eyes
BLOOD’S TALE OF BIRDS & MEMORY

& I can’t remember wearing a brown sparrow’s bones
    around my neck
& I can’t remember the whippoorwills flocking towards the incubator
    where I slept looking for their eggs
& I can’t remember the sapsuckers drinking from my throat
    vampiric
& the owls knew my name better than I did
    they had my ethos in their 270-degree sight
&, &, &,
    I can’t remember my parrots reciting every word I ever said

    but I never really wanted them to
PART THREE
FIVE PIECES

01.

Gurgling grace, I say:
Yes, father, I have been melting
into the horizon.

My trachea has been slashed
like a puddle with a toe
running through it.

Yes, father, I have been in the atmosphere.
Yes, father, my retinas have been slipping
back into my eye sockets.
I blinked not once but twice.

It was more like a flutter,
& I called it the murmuring.

The daffodils got hinged
in my belt loops, and I was
left for dead. I was the away.

My lead-jawed lover called me
a sod flopper. Like rats fucking
on ice, I don't even know what that means
02.

I used to make love on the sofa
with her under blood & feather
blankets. She would roll her eyes
back into her skull.
She would clasp her lower lip
with her eye teeth & say
breathlessly, furiously,
*I am pluming sideways halfway
up towards wherever God is.*

Maybe He was on the tin roof
with a spy glass peering through the sky light.
Maybe it was cold up there.

03.

I was 100,000 years old
when I said, *No se desanime. No esta olvidado.*
I was twisted up like a bone.

We were folded into angles
& angels. She was with child again,
fat like an oriole.
She turned herself into something that could suck the bluejay cries from the air. Suck it dry.

04.

People have other obligations to fulfill apart from Death, so I have come home & begun reluctantly to tell you about the whole Goddamn thing.

05.

My sleeves were rolled high up my arms. I was wearing a button-up shirt which my friends say is the red Jesus would choose if he was alive & kicking. So I buy them a round of stiff fucking drinks.

Baby, we will drink them mercilessly like Jesus would. We will admire the sound the ice cubes make when sliding from the side of a full glass back down to the bottom of an empty one.
WHERE WE BEND

01.

At world’s end: hydrangeas.
Transcendent hydrangeas.
Blind Willie Johnson's wet acoustics in a time capsule so slide,
baby, slide: The parameters of knowledge & compass & physics. The waking, lethargic world & darkness. Triangulation is required to know the distance between yourself & darkness.
Little Girl, when will you be married?

I'm with you in your darkness but the mud puppy is in the gutted fish tank at the end of the world with gravel, shrubbery,

—please feed Him.
He nudges his way around the glass but we can't keep Him here in the middle of all this sharklessness & irrelevance. I have squandered my inheritance on cucumbers & eggs.
A journey to the moon.
I dotted the nebulae with crumbs
so I could find my way home

   to Detroit: where baseball cards no longer
motorize the bicycle gears.

   Where we have become

   a flippant, nonnegotiable blink.

   I am still a very long way from home.

Little Girl, we will sit in astonishment,

   wondering, *Who will die first?*

   We will trek the bloodshot acreage,

   hold thick bottles of beer

   & slam their creamy undertow.

   Lick the teeth of wheat & barley.

   We are such sickle-cell laureates!

   We are such wicked wicked architects!

   The roses will be mopped

from along the freeways.

   The sickly alphabet will go nuts

   with despair & while everyone is kissing

   all the consonants of their lives

   goodbye, we are moving, voweled,

   bending into nothingness & grace.

Fourteen gallons of trash will still be

   fourteen gallons of trash. We are made of

   several different diameters & shapes.
Little Baby playing with a coat hanger
in Little Girl’s womb, am I a God
fearing man?

What a salty world you & I meditated upon:
doomed to be measured
in wheels & honey—oats & lumber
—the acronyms of earth—

*Half-step your way into false eternity, child!*

because we will never live our lives
like acrobats. We will never waltz
towards the sobbing horizon or
from the forgotten orphanage
to clerkless drugstore;
I have forgotten to take my medication.

At once, everything becomes dotless,
hospitalized, lickable:
I’ve got a brick back alley on my mind,
a fistful of amneotics, a vial of formaldehyde.

In the military graveyard,
Little Girl consolidates her loss
into semiautomatics & knives.
Twenty-one guns sing at once
in reverence:

    The hallelujah of guns.

We suspend. Like cats. Above granite.

Row upon row of "Infant son/daughter of…"
Humanity's crib death.
Humanity, I watched you get dressed
in the morning.
Grandfather with the busted hand,
how God shook you like a fish.
Grandfather with the armchair,
this is all I remember of you:

    Hey, batter, batter! Swing, batter, batter.

Detroit: where we bend.
I have taken too many drugs
to be healthy ever again
so I bend & quake.
So put me back on oxygen, Doctor:
so let us pray.

So I have fallen in that darkness
called love with a girl
who puts begonias in her hair
but can't spin a quarter on the bar rail.
How fat & thick & relevant love is.
There is love & then there's L-O-V-E love.
Little Girl, you are always in your Goddamn moods after the late shift, sucking on soft blueberries.

Little Girl, what is your real name?
I will call you ampersand.
LAST MINUTE (DROWNING, 1943)

“The road to heaven is equally short from all places.”
- Sir Thomas More

0:60 Everything dies with a false vibrato,
in a false abrasion (straining the uvula)
0:59 damning the minor scales. But me? I’m clinging
to a sinking grand piano, clinging to a smoking
0:58 riptide in which so many of the sticklebacks
are amputating their gills but I made Katie
0:57 stay out of the ocean because I loved her
so fiercely. Mom? I loved her too, but here
0:56 are the only things that can be said
about maternity: it is tongue-in-cheek. It is lonely
0:55 in all of its chambers with all of their beige drapery.
How can the world be filled with anything
0:54 when there are so many stillbirths daily? How
did the deathsmith find me? Why is my childhood
0:53 twitching in a bag? The bag & my childhood are dead,
my favorite colt is dead. He was good for little
0:52 more than lapping up the saltlick but I loved him
because he was loyal only to me. Back in Sioux City,
0:51 my kitchen used to smell of cinnamon & vanilla.
Oh mercy mercy me: those three ghosts
0:50 in the coral, are they sure they’re not rain?
Are you sure you’re not rain? Sometimes
0:49 rain dips its leaky feet in Epsom salt
because they are swollen. Swollen, in other tongues, 

0:48 is sometimes known as bloated is sometimes known as God. 

My doll-less daughter doesn’t believe in God. 

0:47 She doesn’t believe in love. She doesn’t believe 
in the moon’s bastard children because they have no 

0:46 respect for the cosmic hierarchy (the feudalism 
of the universe). Planets can kiss night after night 

0:45 with knives between their throats because they are 
of the same caste, so they grab each other 

0:44 by the Adam’s apple in a passion so ripe & wet 
that they forget they are being watched. 

0:43 There is a writhing worm in the middle 
of everything. Perry Como is playing nonstop in my head. 

0:42 He owes me a harpsichord & I owe him several bubbles 
& a paradox so I guess it seems we’re even, even 

0:41 though he took my last skag. He kept it as a keepsake 
above the patchwork above his doorway. In a previous life, 

0:40 I was light’s last great apprentice. In the life 
before that, I was nothing of great importance, or so 

0:39 Dad says, but my sister still vouches that he has nothing 
but an agenda & a miserable lantern. She explains, 

0:38 When you were younger, you tried to construct a star 
out of cord. They need oxygen just as much as humans. 

0:37 They need someone to love them so will you love 
this star? Will it have a name? Or will you 

0:36 mourn it when it dies & grieve like no one else 
has grieved before you? The grief is in you, 

0:35 little one, you just have to find it & tug it out
of its windows because it's yours & only yours &

0:34 everything deserves someone to mourn for it. But I wasn’t trying
to build a star. I was trying to build a dragon but I couldn’t

0:33 get past the skeleton (its guts got tangled upon more guts
already on the fence) so I wept. So farewell, my beloved

0:32 almost-dragon, my beloved almost-friend, farewell. Farewell
because I have cured nothing; because the more tragic

0:31 the spasms of departure, the more frantic the reunions.
The more frantic the dust, the further it settles

0:30 into the bones (& into the bones of the bones) & so on
& so forth, back into the dust of the ocean, where nothing

0:29 asphyxiates -- only accepts everything as true & just
gives up like a cigarette in a puddle but only half

0:28 as dead. In the war between God & man, it’s a stalemate;
the battles between smoke & glass, between tension

0:27 & melody, between my voice & my name have all produced
victors but no one forgives them, so Hallelujah. Hallelujah

0:26 to the water serpents tapping at the salt of a language
that has no vowels so everything comes out gagged

0:25 like it’s lost in some bottled note somewhere, trying to free itself
& locate the finest lily patch off the shore. It wants to rest

0:24 in the petals, to build a raft out of the stems to float
in the bath but it doesn’t have the glue nor the cinder

0:23 to hold it all together, so it teaches itself only about damage.
There are only so many ways one can rearrange

0:22 the letters & still have the same word. So carve it
in the walls, in the trunk of an oak, scratch it

0:21 in wet cement, scrawl: forgive me because my river
blindness never will because I have failed it. My socket wrenches are in the drawer above the rug. They are yours now because everything now belongs to you: my shorthand, my ball gloves, all my cheap joints, my memory, all liquids, the spare pennies in the icebox, so Hallelujah, but rejoice for nothing. Who wants something so much that it aches deep in the clavicle? Who wants something as much as I want a cigarette? Who loves something as much as I loved the brined deep? Ambassadors, welcome me. Show me around the corridors with pictures of torched boats. Greet me at your meals as a brother. Serve only rabbit dripping off its bones. Keep the bars open until they’re dry, pouring whiskey like it’s water because it doesn’t matter if something is ruined, only that it doesn’t know how ruined it is & that the living never come up at the barstools. Our wives are over their heartache. Our children have forgotten us, & such is Hell: a gathering of the lost who don’t know they are lost (who shake in bed at night) so Hallelujah. So I tell them to find somewhere else to crash. Find some other galaxy to admire. Find me a bucket for my molars so I can find them in the morning. Find me some sutures for this gash in my clavicle. Make it scab up by first light so it doesn’t leak on my pillow, so Hallelujah. Make it burst in a few weeks. Was I not a graceful mammal prior to Death? The dull blade, and love with all of its razors. When I thought
I could fly. Worshipping nothing
0:06 in its grave. A half-dragon crying
father, why have you forsaken me oh why
0:05 oh why oh why have you forsaken me as he was draining
on a post into the dirt that soaks up what it pleases,
0:04 so Hallelujah. So Dirt, allow what you want:
worms, minerals, a couple Bibles, dirty
0:03 jazz, dirty melody, the handlebars of a bike
with a back tire that is running out of air.
0:02 That is a tribute to youth: an homage
to the violent discourse between science
0:01 & machinery. A brackish argument over
an obvious accident in evolution.
PART FOUR
Kirk Pinho is everything seen & unseen, the totality of existence. Kirk Pinho is everything real & unreal, human & inhuman, living & dead. Kirk Pinho is become death, the destroyer of worlds. He is the depth of your despair & the depth of your love. Kirk Pinho is the Lord, your god. Thou shalt worship no god other than Kirk Pinho. Kirk Pinho is not the Lord, your god. Kirk Pinho brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Or did he? You see? Kirk Pinho can maintain some semblance of humanity. Or can he? Kirk Pinho & the devil are separated by a thin white line. He is the myth & truth of procreation.

He is your fufu drink with a cherry in it. He is the bald grandfather smoking a stogie while watching *Wheel of Fortune* in the recliner next to his dead wife. Kirk Pinho keeps his eyeballs in a jar of saline solution at night. Kirk Pinho stumbles around the house eyeless. He is the seven-term mayor of Murderville, USA. He expects you to remember his name.
Kirk Pinho pretends to have the answer to every question you ask him like:

Q: Dear Kirk Pinho, why me?
A: Because Kirk Pinho is a vengeful Kirk Pinho.
Q: Dear Kirk Pinho, why am I on this carousel of a planet?
A: Remember: We spin. We spin. We spin.

He pretends he is not lying to you. He believes nothing he says.
Kirk Pinho is your multiple personality disorder.
Kirk Pinho is the Luftwaffe circling your soul, the KGB, the Tamil Tigers.

Kirk Pinho is not your yuletide spirit. Kirk Pinho is not your Auld Lang Syne or your old acquaintance.

Kirk Pinho is both the king & queen you were promised when you woke up hung over.

Kirk Pinho picks flea scabs from the old spaniel’s throat & squeezes her arthritic hip until she whines like a railroad.
He kisses her cottony nose & she nuzzles him on the couch.
I’m so sorry, sweetie. Stay, baby, Kirk Pinho says. She stays. She sleeps. She is snoring on the treadmill of dreams.
Love makes forgiveness no biggie.
In a Congressionally-approved resolution, kitty comes & declares war on doggy.
Doggy’s incisors are an insurgency against kitty.
Really didn’t expect that, kitty says.

Kirk Pinho thinks about another God yawning into the clutch of His elbow, bored with His archangels.
Kirk Pinho challenges Blood to a duel & asks the seraphim to referee.
Kirk Pinho would rather not watch Blood masturbate into the crinkles of a skin mag.

Kirk Pinho is the purple tuck of bruise throbbing behind your kneecap after the surgery to repair your meniscus.

Kirk Pinho is stutter-stepping on a basketball court & driving the lane hard. 
Kirk Pinho takes an elbow above the left eye & is stitched up in the locker room.  

He has been fattened up & sent to the electric chair. 
He spits on the apartment wall & watches the dribble slide down like quick little toboggans. 
Kirk Pinho is the operative word in just about every sentence ever written. 
Kirk Pinho knows it’s cold outside, baby. 
He is not a figment of your imagination. He is a figment of your imagination. 
He is the Judgment of Paris. He is not the Judgment of Paris. 

Kirk Pinho is the intrauterine infection that killed your mother & orphaned you. 

You are an orphan. You are an orphan. You are an orphan. 
You are an orphan. You are an orphan. You are an orphan. 
You are an orphan. You are my orphan. You are an orphan. 
You are an orphan. You are an orphan. You are an orphan. 
You are an orphan. You are an orphan. You are an orphan.
Make it stop.

Just because you’re afraid of the dark doesn’t mean that it’s frightened of you.

In a poem written by Kirk Pinho, Kirk Pinho turns into a spike, is hammered into the train tracks & waits for his little bones to get churned into butter.
Kirk Pinho doesn’t like your politics but, HOLY SHIT, BABY, Kirk Pinho wants your 350-horsepower, eight-cylinder body leaking transmission fluid on the Vera Wang sheets.

Kirk Pinho could be your submissive little bitch but Kirk Pinho prefers didacticism.

He is not a myth. Yes he is.

Kirk Pinho accidentally told a Jewish guy a Holocaust joke at the bar & the Jewish guy promptly corrected Kirk Pinho: the Shoah. Kirk Pinho then responded: Golgotha.

Kirk Pinho was the first pejorative introduced into the English language. For example, call your boyfriend a Kirk Pinho &, without fail, he’ll say I’ll be back when I feel like it. He is invective.

Kirk Pinho last missed you the last time he missed you.
Kirk Pinho likes lying to you. No he doesn’t. He can’t help himself. Yes he can.

At some point in Kirk Pinho’s childhood, childhood existed as nothing but a vapor.

Kirk Pinho is a theater of war, a million accordions of teeth.
He is the thorny drawstring tied around Blood’s head.

Nice to be wrapped around you again, Kirk Pinho says.

Kirk Pinho is the personification of post-structuralism.

Kirk Pinho remembers the ascending major-scale guitar riffs used to praise him.

Kirk Pinho remembers the last time he made love to a beautiful woman. She whispered, Get behind me, baby. Her hair was pulled back into a bulb. She moaned like a blender. The cat watched & sniffed her clavicle. She
left early the next morning, before the sun had a chance to say,

*I'm alive.*

*I'm alive.*

*I'm alive.*

*I'm alive.*

*Notice me.*
Kirk Pinho is raking wet apple tree leaves into a pile as big as a bookshelf when his brother shows up begging for heroin money. Kirk Pinho has no money. Has no brother. Forces him to suck cock in Cass Corridor.

Kirk Pinho is not de-clawed or housebroken like his brother thinks.

He steals Blood’s tilted head & puts it on a stick, parading it around to the townspeople. *Look what I found! Take a look at this!*

Kirk Pinho is so meta.

He convinces himself he is the fuselage of truth.

Kirk Pinho is the cardboard box he placed Blood’s tongue in & mailed to his old lover. *No hard feelings*, the tongue says when she opens it.

There were eyes.

He is a lobster with claws neutralized by electrical tape.

He is in the aquarium waiting to be selected by a 30-something trophy wife.

Kirk Pinho has found a newfangled way to die.

He shoves the radio under the blurry bathwater. Feels the electrodes like nimble nails. Everybody watching him stays calm.

He has you at gunpoint, snot running down his upper lip while begging his lost sisters to please come home. Kirk Pinho has no sisters.

Kirk Pinho is the sobbing 2 a.m. phone call to your mother in Philadelphia.
Kirk Pinho has been a sorry excuse for a scapegoat.

He does not trust you using the stove while he’s at work.

Kirk Pinho will not invite you to his birthday party.
He plays 9-ball with the sun & moon across the black felt of sky. He calls *sun side pocket*.

Kirk Pinho says, *That’s what I’m talking about, bitches.* The universe with its perpetual English.

When Kirk Pinho is at rest, Kirk Pinho will remain at rest unless acted upon by some other object.

*Do not be that object, for I am a vengeful Kirk Pinho,* he decrees.


Kirk Pinho is the falling walls of Constantinople. Kirk Pinho is the sack of York. Kirk Pinho is the bombardment of Sodom & Gomorrah with little bits of planet. He is Athens burning, the ash making love to Pompeii. He is the invasion of Baghdad. He is the battle of Fallujah.

He is all those cities of worms, the crown of thorns, the child welded into her mother’s arms, the sniper on the roof.

Kirk Pinho is your shaking crib death.

The world according to Kirk Pinho is both a birthday & a body bag.

Kirk Pinho bought Blood a body bag for his birthday, so there may be a conflict of interest. Blood says, *Thanks, Dad,* and heads upstairs to his room.

Kirk Pinho responds, *You are nothing but a vessel.*

Don’t blame Kirk Pinho for all the pain in the world. Blame Kirk Pinho for all the pain in the world. He is just method acting.

Kirk Pinho buys stock in the pain sector, where the futures are suggesting a bull market. The capital gains on his investments are sure to be worth it.

Kirk Pinho is cognitive dissonance. Kirk Pinho is not cognitive dissonance.

He is apocryphal. He is not apocryphal.
Kirk Pinho lied to Mary when he said he was wearing a rubber. *Surprise, baby!*
Kirk Pinho rifled through his body & found a jewelry box. Inside: a handful of opals in his heart & onyx in his lungs. He turned inside out like an inverted umbrella. His body shook in the wind.


With his thumbs up, Kirk Pinho smiled in his autopsy photo. Kirk Pinho is solely responsible for your Stockholm syndrome.

Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved. Kirk Pinho was loved.

He gets lap dances from all those *woe-is-me* motherfuckers. He broadcasts your nightmares to the world in HD. He is the one-liner you discarded after the failed bar rail joke. You are pawing at the arboretum glass. He doesn’t flinch when you say you wish you were mortal. Good luck. He will wait patiently while you are identified on the surveillance tape.
Kirk Pinho has a very strict morning masturbation regimen that begins with his computer chair & ends with an abortion drooling down his palm. Kirk Pinho smells like a jarful of marital despair.

Kirk Pinho’s largesse amounts to half the GDP of the moon. He is more of an Old Testament-type Kirk Pinho.


Kirk Pinho’s favorite hobby is drinking a jug of ammonia & getting behind the wheel to test his tire traction. If someone had told Kirk Pinho he would end up elected the eighth wonder of the universe as a write-in candidate, he would have prepared a speech. Kirk Pinho wants attention. Kirk Pinho does not want attention.

When he was a high school junior, Kirk Pinho told a girl to hike up her skirt. She liked it rough like an exorcism. Her calf muscles hard as apples. No, that’s not true. He was a junior in college. Or he was in junior college. She was the president of a junior college. He doesn’t remember.

Don’t worry. Kirk Pinho is not Blood. Kirk Pinho is Blood. Kirk Pinho is millennia behind on his child support payments. Kirk Pinho is written all over your pretty face in semen platonically. He is your jaundice. He is your stink eye. He is your pancreatic cancer, asymptomatic until advanced stages. Kirk Pinho is a sadist. Kirk Pinho is not a sadist.
Just so we’re clear.

Kirk Pinho is an infantilized version of Kirk Pinho.  
If Kirk Pinho calls, you’ll be expected to ignore it.  
When you bump into him at the bar later, say, *I saw you called a few weeks ago but I’ve just been super busy.*  
If any of the previous statements are true, Kirk Pinho wants you to tell him.

Please. Hurry.  
Guess if you must.
Kirk Pinho is made in Kirk Pinho’s image.
On the fifth & sixth days, he created the chameleon & its stereoscopic vision. He told the dinosaurs to piss off. He created the porous ribs, the thorax, the anterior, the bicuspid valve of the muscle Kirk Pinho once called the heart.
Kirk Pinho is a good substitute for angioplasty.

His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb. His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb. His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb. His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb. His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb. His heart is wide for you like a nail bomb.

He would love to shove his tongue between the gaps in your teeth. He would love to pull your pants down to your knees & fuck you in an alley, syncopated to a soundtrack of cats yowling. The carrion stuck to their gums.

He would love to have the memory of math.
He would love to be the thumbprint of himself on a loaded semiautomatic.
He would love to snort coke from the stretch marks on your stomach, baby.
He would love to see how much light the stars can rain.
Kirk Pinho speaks for no one but himself.

He would love you in an alley. He would love you like artillery.
He would create you, & you would create him back.
But on the seventh day, Kirk Pinho does not rest. So instead, he takes Mary to the abortion clinic on Christmas Day.

Kirk Pinho is her uterus made of thunder & thunder & thunder.

Kirk Pinho is not her afterbirth or her midwife. He is not her biological clock flashing 12:00.

Kirk Pinho is the slip of her mocha nipple.

The thin continents of ice disappear with each thick lick of the wiper blade.

Kirk Pinho holds Mary’s hand.

Imagine her body unzipping into a row of calla lilies: *That is the antithesis of birth*, Kirk Pinho thinks.

Imagine the calipers yanking the half-headed & half-ribbed fetus from her womb.

Imagine the heartbeat like a tennis ball against a garage door.

Kirk Pinho wants you to think of these things, but Kirk Pinho does not think of these things himself.

He thinks of the little Tutankhamen, undressed to the nines, creating a following in the dumpster, practicing his own form of alchemy.

Dream over. Dream over. Dream over.

Etc.