




EVERYTHING IN ASPIC

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Lori Brack

Attempts at the Fall

How do we draw a line between a poem and a novel and a memoir? The imagining mind does not respect these boundaries ... both gender and genre are endlessly blurry. - Eileen Myles

1

I am writing with flame on onionskin, on leaf skeleton so fine I can see through. The beat of my heart, pinch of desire, chiming center. I devour. I want to gorge.

Break it apart with my self. Not my pulse, other than its flutter. Break it open. All the way behind my eyes, the press, the shatter.

2

In the genre of my loves, each text dances on the shelf, bindings shiver. They won't stay where they belong. In the morning I classify and file. By night, I sweat into pages, my fingers and tongue flick up sense, melt where it touches.



3

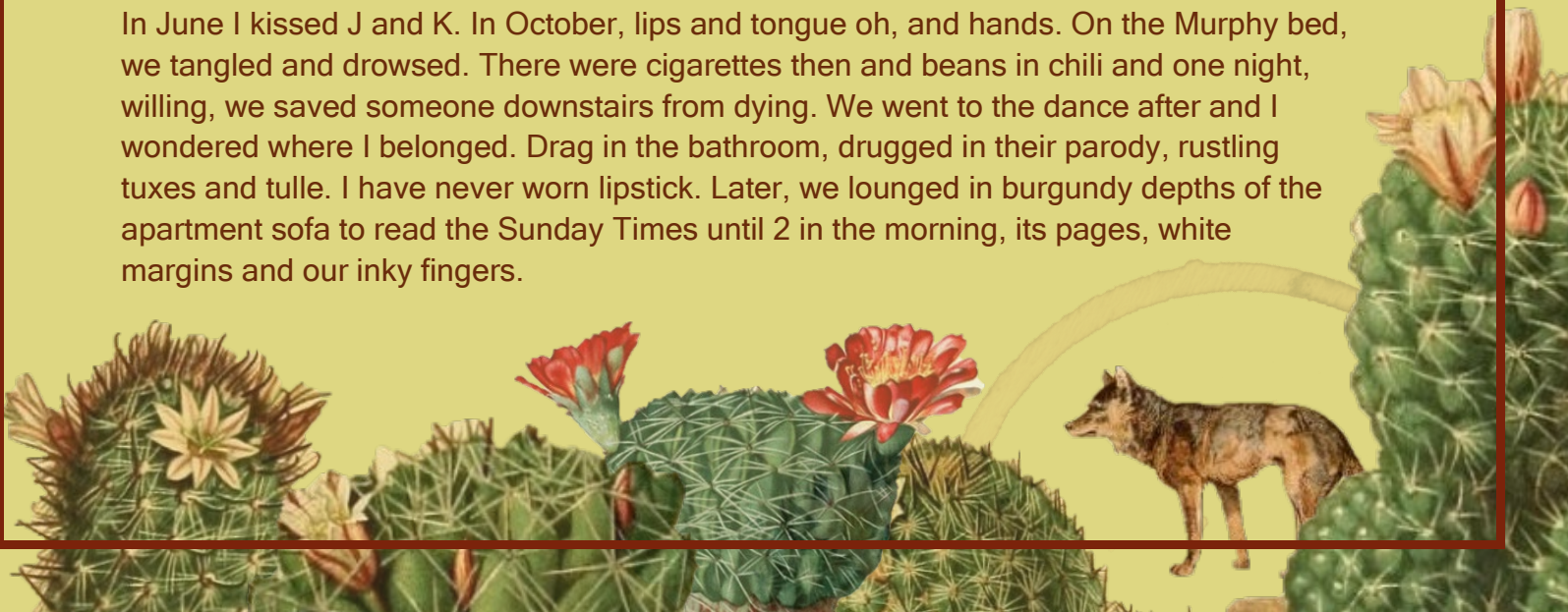
Bed snug against the corner in my furnished apartment, your knock woke me and I stumbled back to covers after letting you in. You came under the sheets and we discovered the old position we imagined forebears practiced, hinged at pubic bones, mounting, mounting. In that dark you said I love you the first time poised over the brink, and I. I loved your laugh and your past, my idea of you. I ran my hand over belly scars—knife, street, L.A. — and wanted to.

4

I keep thinking, years on and off — you asleep across the river. Brown as the cliff, I had to squint to discern your long legs from the scree. I crossed the water for you, sharp stone bare beneath us and waterfall so loud we could not hear each other's breath - nothing audible so small as our damp insides, sighing and the slight, so ephemeral gasp of us drowning.

5

In June I kissed J and K. In October, lips and tongue oh, and hands. On the Murphy bed, we tangled and drowsed. There were cigarettes then and beans in chili and one night, willing, we saved someone downstairs from dying. We went to the dance after and I wondered where I belonged. Drag in the bathroom, drugged in their parody, rustling tuxes and tulle. I have never worn lipstick. Later, we lounged in burgundy depths of the apartment sofa to read the Sunday Times until 2 in the morning, its pages, white margins and our inky fingers.



6

Voluptuary: Feel it on your tongue, the way vowels shape your mouth, as if you are eating the cool cream of dessert, making sure sweetness touches every part of the warm interior.

October neverminds the rest. Butterflies colonize rusty zinnias, space between veins, gorging nectar before the freeze.

7

If I time the tea right, take out the leaves at the moment of blooming, my brown cup releases a replica of spring. Do I surrender or am I taken, disarmed, made prisoner of light and shade? The dusk on Friday - I was there for once, letting it happen without keeping watch, my feet swelling and back round, aging in a red dress.

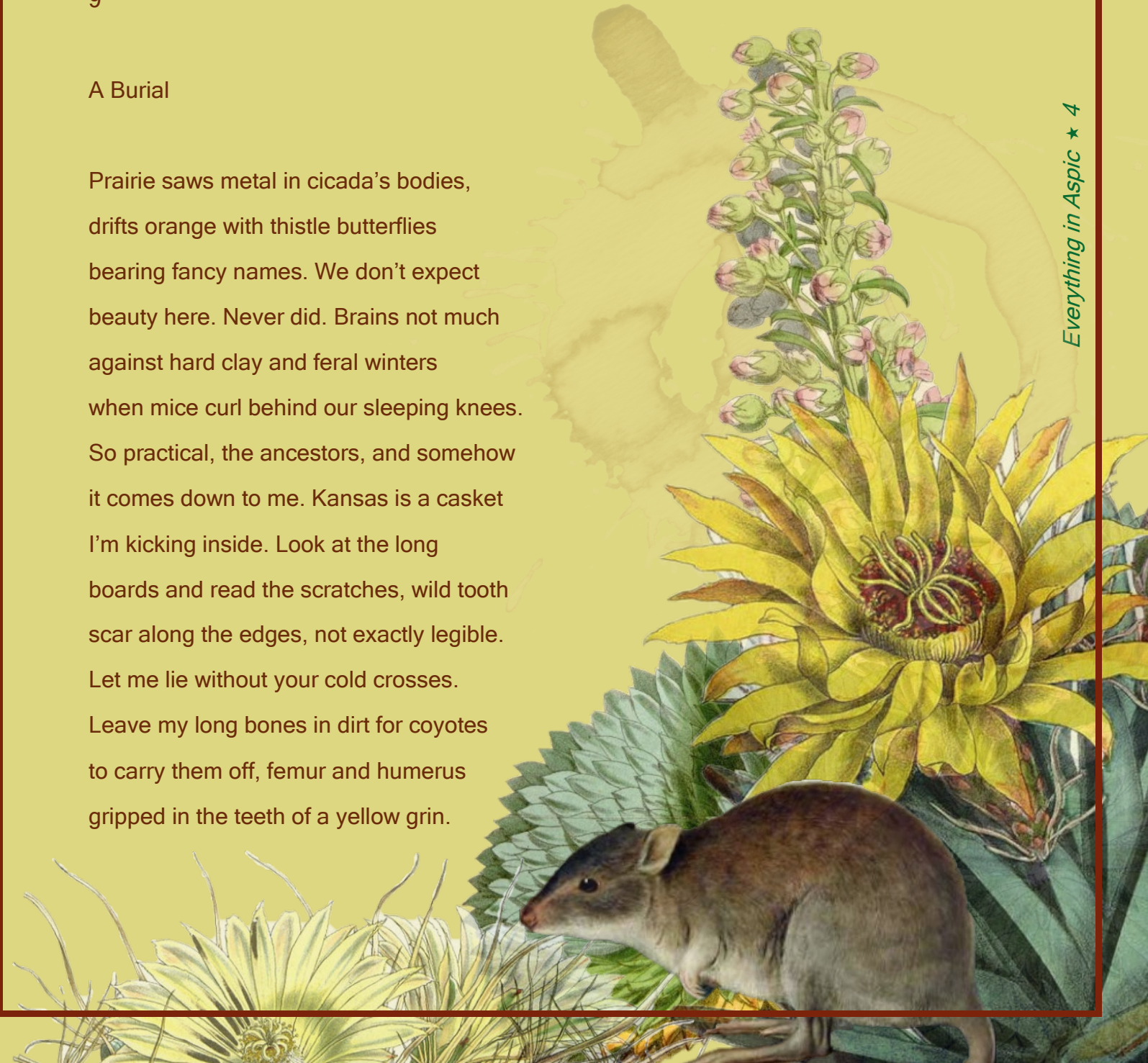
8

Oh rev of motors and hot squeal of brakes – the impulse to plunge. When we drive that way it's to replicate the body urge in pistons and steel. To show we are just as strong, filled with lusts. I might have been such a one born 20 years later, unencumbered by mother's feminine model. I might have flaunted such swagger, a magnet that pulls me toward those hands on the wheel, doing that thing with both feet that roars the engine and holds it fast.



A Burial

Prairie saws metal in cicada's bodies,
drifts orange with thistle butterflies
bearing fancy names. We don't expect
beauty here. Never did. Brains not much
against hard clay and feral winters
when mice curl behind our sleeping knees.
So practical, the ancestors, and somehow
it comes down to me. Kansas is a casket
I'm kicking inside. Look at the long
boards and read the scratches, wild tooth
scar along the edges, not exactly legible.
Let me lie without your cold crosses.
Leave my long bones in dirt for coyotes
to carry them off, femur and humerus
gripped in the teeth of a yellow grin.



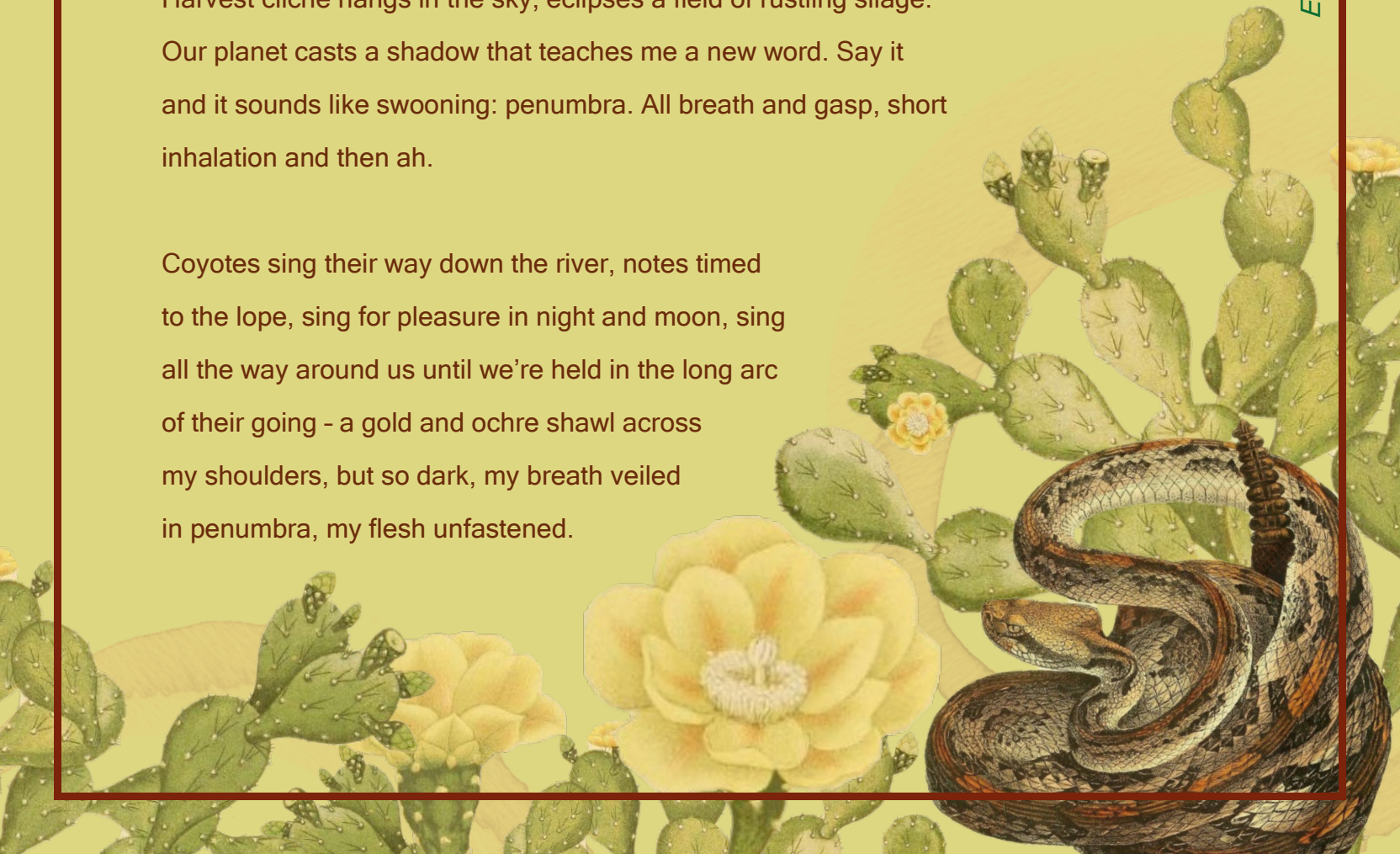
10

Animals' underparts are paler, belly and sex, wheat-buff shortgrass bent in hurricane wind. Coyote puts nose in the air and snuffles long news from the gulf. In town, air slides across windows the sound of brush through underfur. What made us get up from deep beds of pleasure and push the plow, rinse the linens? I pause over rough fur, one moment tangled in fence, the next adrift in a gale. A swath of blackbirds rises like notes in an aria of howl and yip.

11

Harvest cliché hangs in the sky, eclipses a field of rustling silage.
Our planet casts a shadow that teaches me a new word. Say it
and it sounds like swooning: penumbra. All breath and gasp, short
inhalation and then ah.

Coyotes sing their way down the river, notes timed
to the lope, sing for pleasure in night and moon, sing
all the way around us until we're held in the long arc
of their going - a gold and ochre shawl across
my shoulders, but so dark, my breath veiled
in penumbra, my flesh unfastened.




AUTHOR BIOS

Lori Brack's book of poems, *Museum Made of Breath*, was published by Spartan Press in 2018. Her poems and essays have appeared in journals including *Another Chicago Magazine*, *North American Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *The Fourth River*, *Entropy Magazine*, and others. She manages a project in Kansas dedicated to the professional development of artists in all genres and assists with a project bringing Asian art to elementary and secondary school students.



Jackie Braje is a Brooklyn-based poet-person, the Programs Director of The Poetry Society of New York, and the Editor-in-Chief of Milk Press. A Pushcart Prize nominated poet, she has been published in *The Minnesota Review*, *The Nottingham Review*, *Bridge Eight*, *Vagabond City*, *Dark River Review*, and elsewhere. She is also a 2019 Brooklyn Poets Fellow and the recipient of a 2020 Mineral School Artist Residency.

The background of the entire image is a complex marbled paper pattern. It features swirling, organic shapes in shades of brown, tan, and black, with thin, vibrant red lines weaving through the design. The overall effect is reminiscent of traditional stone or shell marbling. A thin, dark red border frames the entire composition. In the center, there is a rectangular inset with a light beige, aged paper texture. This inset contains a faint, circular watermark or stamp, and it serves as the background for the main text.

Thank you for reading the
second issue of
Everything in Aspic!