

Julia Cohen

To Fill a Sieve

I.

The circus tent is perky and wants
to talk politics with the insatiable.

A chronic dream of candid harm
and adoration. Generations

of upgrades and brittle scaffolding.
All that neon.

They are the best ventriloquists,
thrown voices of a disembodied

bird. Ten sleeves away from where
they stand and what they say.

II.

Octopus dexterity mounts
heads on an abacus, counting

time to the number of epaulettes.
Needles for fingers. A ballet slipper

fills with blood and spills graffiti
on the floor. Covered not in snow, but

crumpled napkins. What comes down?
with condensation. Capsules to travel

and gulp. A drone, a hum, a whirl, prelude
to a wasp's nest. It never descends,

but seeps into drywall. The vegetable
garden and parking lot. Perfumed

to smell sweet or natural, evenly
the abattoir. We hide, thinking chthonically.

III.

Unearthing our ostrich heads we
find our hair has already been

steeped. Clay strangers pass
with an armful of ankles. Beneath bangs,

our foreheads entreat: take
their rubble and smooth our skin.

Their hearts of grapes, funerals
and milk on sly lips. A will mends

cavalier. Even a mild swell is
variance: mint steam, human at times.

We usher them to the upside-down
door. A knee-level handle and a keyhole

fitted for drops from the cloudy house.
To renovate with thimbles. Gather

the silverware and melt utensils
to wind chimes. Negotiations of soapy guns.

IV.

We call for a master carver
of a finer skull. To wave a match

in alcoved warmth. They will thaw
and re-green. Keep the tears and save

an ocean, we sleep best on the crest
of breakers. Inland, we kneel

and forge insular salinity. When we
meet the river, we will line their sieves

with moss to cup sips. Drink
ourselves a crisp open house.

Julia Cohen graduated from Wesleyan University last spring and is currently a Ford Fellow in Wesleyan's Writing Program. She hopes to work in publishing when the fellowship ends. She has just finished her first poetry manuscript and is completing a chapbook. Her work has been published in *Hanging Loose*, *Nth Position* and *GutCult*. Contact: jacohen@wesleyan.edu

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