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## Nap-of-the-earth Flight

Vanesha Pravin

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Vanesha Pravin

*Nap-of-the-earth Flight*

1.

In the situation room, we wait. Someone – the name now forgotten – hovers,  
takes photographs later stamped *Sensitive Compartmented Information*.  
If reason is our currency, how do we enter the executive order?  
Not with the weight of papyrus, velum, or legal pads.  
Nothing traceable back to detainee testimony, to meaningful data.  
This is the whole-eye transplant, and the narrative is made ours.

2.

Of bodies – ours usher theirs, greening the sand and curing through night-scopes.  
And, lo, a wind named us, and we delivered:  
A bird, a hawk, Seals flown through night.  
How low the mountains have shrunk, squatting into rubble-filled caves.

3.

You are not a witness. This is a dream. Dreams are cheap.  
The bits have happened, but there's no discernible proof.  
Still you are in it, so commit, move against wind.  
Blades cut through the oil of night: Team 6  
rappels and gunfire in the courtyard, the boom of a breaching charge:  
Live from the situation room, we're in, we're out. Rooster, it's a nap-of-the-earth flight.

4.

Night stills, the hills flatten.                      The world is                      starting to  
look the same.    How did you not know this?

5.

To hatch The New World within this world: *There* is an  
imperative, born of “necessity” – to stabilize, to democratize –  
talk full of fairy spores to neighbors picking up  
frozen fish filets, installing new brake pads, bleaching the tub.

You are not helpless. Merely useless. Just like one of them,  
swung in an orbit: Emptying the  
compost, running the disposal, setting the alarm.

6.

What the witnesses report can't happen,                      never happened –  
perception requires management.                      Just like you can train yourself to lucid dream.  
And in the evolution of management science, casualties                      become simultaneously  
unique and plentiful,                      like Andromeda's cornucopia of blue stars, red stars,  
white stars, yellow stars                      flickering at telescoped remove, mirroring the Milky Way.

7.

Another widow, another orphan, and only later were we told  
the husband was reaching for an apricot.  
He wore no suicide vest. How, afterwards, a Seal kneeled  
before the man's child, waving a yellow glow stick.  
The boy stunned, the fluorescence illuminating the  
gray folds of a Seal's palm. How math conveniently grows  
strange fuzz as I know gamers, too, in the glow of a  
screen at a black site will be erased via number magic.

8.

Back to the dream of disclosure: A little electricity from the grid,  
and the residents are boiling water. The satellite images  
comparing before and after: a starry land dimmed to  
dark sea, pockmarked by day, though night is a stretched  
canvas where the palate turns bright. It is hot and the pillow  
thin and the air smeared with zigzags of mopeds, street carts,  
neon signs, resurrecting the streets one by one, lightening the  
dark. There's a breeze off the river and plates of grilled meats.  
Out come the figs, the dates, the apricots then arranged.  
Night after night, water holds the sun and then the moon.

9.

The morning after, newswires echo press briefings, then cover  
a missing coed, a baby panda's sneezing fit, the competitive  
eating champ for chicken wings: Taste the glaze set to  
the fog of sponsors – *Bounty, The Quicker Thicker  
Picker Upper* flush with the chicken wing-inspired threads:  
*What are lactose-intolerant substitutes for Gorgonzola?  
Is there enough Kosher salt, is there enough cayenne?*

Some say enough: *Sriracha is the new Tabasco*. If hunger is a sufficient reason, by all means eat your tongue.

10.

The reporters with loans, deadlines, dependents. Reader, rappel through the loops of *L*s, scale barbed *W*s, defuse rigged *G*s, block by block and into white space. Omission has the widest of plains, the red herrings flashing like the salmon of underground streams. Catch them and repeat: I am in control of this dream.

11.

You don't even know what to do with one good dream. It might be your dream, but you never retain jurisdiction beyond the night. Drink that glass of water and go back to bed. Tomorrow is a workday and the commute is long. Drawers of litigation folders to be color-coded and new cells to enter on the spreadsheet and yellow Post-its to overnight for the CFO, irritated by your criminal offense of last ordering them in tropical colors. The spindle in the dishwasher is broken and it's time to schedule that colonoscopy. Also, something is very wrong with the dog. He runs away from you, stops, looks back at you like he's now all-too human and needs to fight. Do not engage him in his rabid state, which has been amplified by your obsession with leaked footage.

12.

One official story speaks of strong winds sparking fires, another of migrating dunes, still one more of what felt like the sun hollowing the hospital with a white flare. The dates shaken, the fronds with thorns. Ghosts peeled off gurneys and shepherded through alleys. All carnivorous appetite yet no mouth, captive and febrile. The stories breaking and breaking. A reader infiltrates the afterlife. A reader is a lone agent, undercover.