

THE
PECAN
REE

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To begin with, I cannot begin. Everything insists on patience. Everything is patience. Patience. Am I virtuous, yet. Am I my Self a virtue, yet. Could you say, “You have cultivated such a shape of patience, I could nearly give it a female name. Something like a friend I used to know.” Could you say that to your woman and keep a straight face.

There was a bird’s nest in the pecan tree. The little boys from the blue house on the corner, six and ten, threw stones until it fell and the eggs smashed on the earth, stained it yolk for the moment of a few hours, then dried into a sheen. We didn’t scold them. They were not our children to scold.

This is not my room. I did not fuck you in my bed. I do not know what birds those eggs held. I did not taste the meat of those nuts. I did not crack those hulls with my teeth.



I picked up the fragments of the egg shells and mailed them to Anna. I meant to send her my hair last Solstice, when I cut it all off because my madness had concluded. Instead I kept the locks in a paper bag for nine months. I even moved them with me to a new house. When it was time for the third move, I threw them away in the dumpster. That's bad Voodoo.

Later, the landlord came and sawed down the pecan tree. He didn't haul it off but left it prostrate in the front yard. A corpse of paper. The little boys shot at it with their cap guns. The flies even settled on the bark. Knowing what they know.



III

Your woman stopped over on Tuesday. She brought a pie. Pecan.

“It’s like a wake. A little joke,” she said.

“Thanks,” I said. “That’s kind of you.”

I’m a sucker for kindness.

She sat at the table and picked at the loose threads working up from the lemon tablecloth. I sat on the kitchen counter and smoked out the window; one leg bent and the other dangling like a lure. She kept her fingers gently on her abdomen. Very low on her abdomen. It’s obvious there is something you don’t know.

When she left I ate a slice and called the landlord to see if he was going to haul away the tree. The phone rang and rang before clicking over. Flat and tonal. He always answers my calls. But it was a good pie.



IV

I thought my daddy would eventually hang himself from that pecan tree. He admired it so. It's like his executioner died before he did. How often does the hanged man outlast the hangman.

I am not sure what you are doing here. I am beginning to guess that I am only a scratch in a figure eight you're doomed to pace. Figure eight tipped sideways, panting and bovine. It isn't cruelty, what you do to me. It isn't unkind. It's only baffling, like salt on ice cream; what in this wide world are you doing? And I think your woman misses you at home. Or maybe she's just lonely. Next time you leave my house, send her around. I like her conversation and her scent reminds me of yours, but with a gentleness you cannot offer.



I think the little boys from across the street have gone away for summer camp. Their mother smokes out on the stoop of that blue house. She's young but aging quickly. Sometimes when I see her I ask for a cigarette. There's always a spare pack in the junk drawer under the sink, but I want to talk to her. I mean really talk to her. I think she knows more about this whole business than she's letting on. The way she keeps a hand on her hip when she sees me. Those dark circles under her eyes. But when it comes time to move beyond "Say, can I bum a cigarette off you?" a panic floods my belly and I shake. It's all ice and impulse. The blurring of wasp wings. So I just ask for a cigarette and we just stay neighbors.



I like the shape of your woman. I like the shape of your woman on a horse, and across the upswing seat of a seesaw, and spread like an ink stain across Mexican sheets. But mostly I like the shape of her on the corpse of my pecan tree. She is a patient woman. She understands animals and what animals desire. She understood why the birds returned to the fallen tree. We tried not to judge how long she sat beside those sad sad birds, coaxing. We tried to act natural.

When I say patience I mean I can't stand it. When I say patience I mean: burn that lock of hair I gave you. Do no harm. Do no harm; to me, to me.

