




MEDEA KID

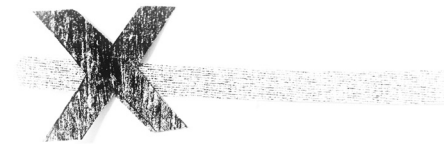
by harold lehmann

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dedicated to Sasha A

my pain's a fair price to take away your smile,
Medea by Euripedes



start

i read about the plays in ancient greece
they had this special crane
called The Mechane

it lifted up the actors playing gods into the sky

Medea was the first non-god
to ride in this crane

>

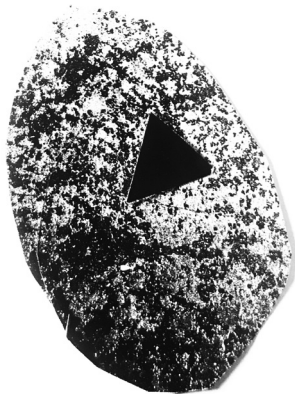
when this whole thing started
i was living on campus
i didn't have a name back then

i still don't have a name but you can call me Os
or Osmium

it's the densest material in the whole universe
i need weight to exist

somebody gave me a letter
i never got mail
i was so excited

i ran to my secret spot
tore open the envelope
and read these words



My Dear Son

*sorry i murdered you
please forgive me
and come see me sometime
so we can talk about it*

Love Mom- Medea

what?

there were tears on my face
i fell backwards

i kept falling
for it seemed then
the earth
or wherever i was
dis-appeared

was i still on campus?

i heard somebody ask

“Hey - You Okay?”

i tried to answer
but i couldn't

i came to in the Nurse's Office
The Nurse was all business
she shook her head and explained

“you are de- hydrated
and need to rest”

i heard myself answer Ok

i did not mention the letter

for when people talk about time
what are they saying?

*that everything moves in time
but still...*

you see it's all about circumstances
the time it takes for a cut to heal
or explain a terrible mistake

situations stretch like rubber bands
you have to be careful where you step
and then *SNAP*

i heard Medea recommended
to Love Your Fate
no matter what
but im getting ahead of myself

these bodies leap out in front of us
and all we can do is run to keep up

after i blacked out
and came to
they sent me back to the residence

the others were staring at me
nobody said a word

What Are You Assholes Looking At?

that's what i would've said
but i didn't speak



i didn't dare

i wasn't going to let anybody know my true thoughts

i asked myself then
is this place a graveyard
is everybody here Dead?

they called it **the campus-**
so was it a school

and if so what were we studying?

i heard the words
sorry i murdered you

and i passed out
again

>

what happens
when time snaps its jaws on you

what 's your next move

>

do not ever tell people what you actually think

the one place i felt safe
was the kitchen
i always ate
even when i wasn't hungry

and i never was
so that was a clue

the cook had these goofy eyes and a wide smile

i loved him
or at least could we could talk
we were close

what was his name?

the cook told me stories about his life
before the kitchen
he had a motorcycle and
roared around everywhere
without limits

i wanted to live like that
you know
reckless and out of time

my head hurt from too much thinking

it was the letter's fault
i never thought before
time never weighed upon me

i was a regular fool with the others

we played cards
we smoked
we took walks
we played video games
we stared into space
we were always bored
but so what



“they” kept us busy

for now

i was obsessed with the space outside the gate
i wondered to myself

the people out there
probably face all kinds of problems and chaos

but

what if it makes em more alive
or at least feel that way?

behind the gate
we were preoccupied and dull

suspicious moved in on me
and hypnotized by such thoughts
i went to see the cook

he was a true goofball
cracking jokes and cracking eggs

it was insanely hot in that kitchen
a happy hell

with the cook laughing
he was a friendly devil

floating through steam
broken plates
and silverware encrusted with sauce

i guess the dead ate constantly

the cook did seem more real than the others

“ HiYa Pal!”

he flipped an omelette
and gave me one of his true goofball looks

i held up the letter from Medea
“ what can you tell me about this?”
i demanded in a voice that was too whiny and too serious

he dropped his giant spoon
grabbed me by the collar
and shook me

“why are you showing this to me?”

“ i don’t know- sorry “

“be out by the dumpsters in 15 minutes!”
he commanded

his look was so mean
i thought i ruined everything
but i followed his words

i went out
paced in circles
turned back
and crept behind the kitchen

i sat on one of the dumpsters
the sky was so heavy
i could barely breathe

i knew my situation was about to shift
the way you sense weather about to change

i lit a cigarette
attempting to be casual
and fell back inside the dumpster

the cook walked out
and dumped 3 bags of garbage on me

“don’t move, stay where you are”
he whispered

“i brought you something to read”

he tossed a book down to me
The True Story of Medea

“Read it and Weep”
he laughed

so there i was
drowning in garbage

my head spinning
and a new thought came to me

if this situation is a movie
i can’t keep up

the frames are moving too fast

amor fati
Love Your Fate-
for it is garbage and it stinks hahahah

is that how the philosophers might speak to us now?

the cook whispered down to me

“there’s only one way outta here now
thru the **garbage**
stay hidden
read that book
cover to cover
and don’t you dare move

the truck will pick you up
and carry you out
beyond the gate

so be cool
whoever you are”

>

>

nobody ever said we were dead
they just said we were on *campus*

i never questioned the situation
why would i?

one time we were kicking a ball around
it smacked the gate

one of the guards flew out
a giant with no neck

he moved so fast
steam shooting out his ears

“who do you think you are?”
he sneered

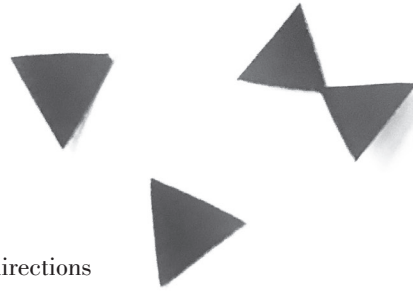
“never approach this gate
avoid this gate at all costs
this gate exists to protect you”

i looked down
muttered i was sorry
picked up the ball
and backed away

i never went near the gate again
though it was in my mind constantly

fear and curiosity pull you in opposite directions
this can make your brain shake

it was all the letter's fault



in the dumpster

underneath the garbage
i read about Medea
there was little else to do

i learned that Medea was a powerful princess

she fell in love with this sailor named Jason
helped him to steal this golden fleece

a fleece is not a sweater

she gave up everything
home friends family

all to be with this dude
a fantasy romance
or maybe the will of the gods
who can say

but Jason had his own ideas
he took off with this other chick
chasing wealth sex and power

at that point Medea lost it
spitting blood and curses

she lured their kids back into their house
and stabbed em to death

then flew up into the sky in a magical chariot

her grandpa was the sun so they say
it was one hell of an exit

so what's the message

that Medea in the book
was the same who wrote me the letter?

mom kills kids
and becomes instantaneous celebrity

what did that make me
nameless blameless invisible?

i wanted to believe in the cook
my one true friend in the entire world
or so i imagined

and something kicked on in me then like a motor
maybe the smell

stink of booze banana peels and rotten meat
i experienced all of it
and thought of Medea

she could be my symbol
i would follow her into life
inside the truck

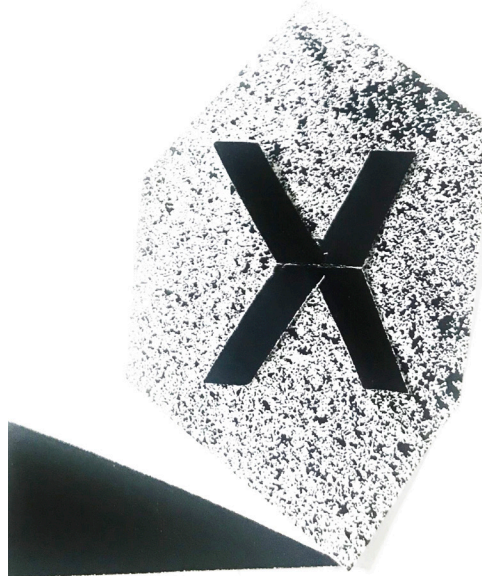
this nasty motoring womb
a fantasy without proof
but it was all mine

the truck rumbled on

i heard voices
were we near the gate?

soon i would be different
with new thoughts

12



and a new body
maybe

and the truck shook

okay i admit it
sometimes i create faerie tales
a bad habit
but hard to break
it's a way to deal

i imagined i was swallowed by a giant

not my idea-
i saw this painting once by the artist Goya

Saturn Devouring his Son
Saturno devorando a su hijo

a blurry figure
a naked giant munching on a smaller naked body
like a chicken wing

i found out it was the god saturn or cronos
god of wealth and war

anyway
what was up with these stories of parents behaving badly?
the gods loved smashing people's lives
it was their favorite past time

i had too much to think about

i kept asking myself
why are you doing this?

you could be back at the campus

13

playing video games

but now this was in motion
for what?

i kept my voice low
in case anybody was listening

i didn't have a name
but i invented one

os or osmium the densest material in the whole universe

the cook gave me this book
and right or wrong

i was going to use it as a map

to find my way to Medea
i needed to land somewhere

it was lonely in there
not a new feeling

i just never noticed before

but the stink of garbage was better than the campus
a black hole

so what
is it a crime now to be lonely?
before i was around people all the time
and i didn't know a single name

i fell out now in search of Medea
who murdered me maybe

a math problem i could not solve
and the more i read the stranger i felt

the character of the Nurse was the only one
who understood what was happening

she seemed to know where things were headed

this made sense as Nurses are skilled
they need to deal with every possible situation

maybe i could locate this Nurse
ask her what to do-

but how?

you can't just walk into a hospital
and demand to see The Nurse

it was time to leave the garbage truck
i couldn't stand the smell anymore

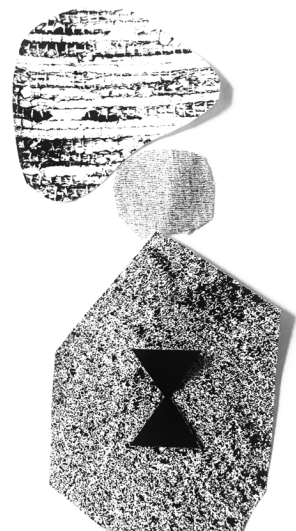
maybe i was becoming more alive?

i crawled out from behind the trash and looked out
we were rolling down this empty road
tall spooky trees on either side

i didn't think
i jumped

a carcass and a movement of time
and in order to keep up with everything

i moved faster than ever i did before
but somehow



i was still too slow

>>

he heard water
and stumbled down below the trees
tried to wash off the muck in a stream

he thought

“well you escaped the campus
congratulations
so what’s your next move?”

are you alive now
or even half-alive?”

this idea of being a ghost
it made decisions feel less complicated

after all
what do ghosts have to do in this world

assuming you’re a ghost with a grievance
you go and haunt people all day long
he did not feel such anger

mostly he was confused
and only required answers about Medea-

were they actually related
and if so - what then?

he wasn’t going back to the campus
not now



and the space between the trees opened up
the wind
the sound of water

he lay back
clothes sinking into the mud
light melting between branches

there was birdsong
and he drifted...

>>

“well are you dead?”

he opened his eyes and saw green boots

“oh - guess not, so how the hell did you get here?”

he saw the old woman’s face-

“aww dang you’re ripe- i can smell you from here”

“are you a Nurse?” he asked

“What? NO- i WAS but not no more.

Who the hell are you and why are you on my property?
Buddy here sniffed you out- though not difficult bein you smell like
ass”

she gestured to the medium-sized dog next to her

the dog gave him a look
sarcastic

as if he was in on the joke

“what kind of mischief you mixed up in kid?”

she seemed to find the situation humorous
as if she possessed additional information

as if she was playing a role and might head backstage
for a costume change

she was tough and imposing like an old bird
the dog watching him with cold eyes

“i’m sorry- i must’ve fallen asleep...”

“where are you from?”

“the campus...”

“oh a STUDENT- well that makes sense-
so what happened- you party too hard
and wander out into the wilderness?”

“i don’t know”

he did not want to argue with the old woman or explain details
he assumed a pose of ignorance

after all
it felt good talking to someone else besides the cook

he saw in her eyes
mockery and kindness
it was reassuring

he wasn’t a ghost
she was speaking to him without crying

or shaking

she looked him over again and shrugged

“alright cmon- let’s see if we can get you cleaned up
and back to where you need to go”

he followed her and Buddy to a dented blue truck
Buddy hopped in the back without hesitation

“you ride back there with Buddy- I don’t want you stinkin up the
cab”

the truck rolled over a dirt track
his head ached

he took deep breaths of the morning air
like a cure

Buddy watched him with that sarcastic look

as if the dog knew all about him
but chose not to speak

they rolled up to a ramshackle house
she did not ask his name or give hers

“stand over there so we can get you cleaned up”

he stood on a stone slab and she sprayed him down with a hose

>>

for now being alive was all that mattered
she brought him fresh clothes

“these belonged to my husband
i don’t believe you’re the same size
but still
they will do for now”

she and Buddy set him up on a cot in the shed next to the house
surrounded by tools and junk
it was comfortable enough

they watched as he finished a meal of grilled cheese and tomato soup

“you never go inside my house got it?”

he nodded

at times, it seemed the old woman was speaking Buddy’s thoughts
the dog kept giving him this look

he was about to snap and ask the dog,
“what the hell is your problem?”

but he didn’t want to seem rude

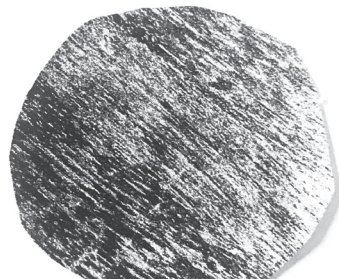
was it paranoid to assume a dog was giving you a look?
before
he always found dogs to be straightforward in their opinions

why was this dog so different?
he decided to calm himself and assess the situation further

he tried to sleep

squirming around in the cot
it was the beginning of something

a new association



he needed to gather more details about Medea and her location
he sensed the old woman knew a lot more than she let on

he reminded himself not to be reckless
“be patient Os”

it wasn’t easy
you receive a letter that says “sorry i murdered you”

what was the appropriate reaction?

anger
sadness
the telltale loneliness

it rushed out like water and drowned over him

he jumped out of bed
wrapped himself in a wool blanket

and walked up to the old lady’s house

he took one long breath and knocked

she came out in her bathrobe
hair in all directions
staring down at him from the door

“What’s yr problem- Can’t you sleep?”

Buddy was right next to her watching, but did not growl

“i’m so sorry to disturb i ...”

“ what do you want?”

“i’m not sure
you are so kind and it’s late
but you never told me your name”

“no i didn’t”

“you mentioned something before
it’s embarrassing to ask
but i have to know
for my own reasons...”

“what?”

“you mentioned that you were a nurse...”

“that was a long time ago”

“ but i mean could you-
do you know somebody named Medea
or her location?”

he held up the book

“i got a letter from a person named Medea
i need to know who she is
and why she wrote me this letter...”

she looked at him sideways and broke off laughing

“can you believe it Buddy
he’s really out of his mind

freaking out in the dark
bout some story he read in a book”

Buddy the Dog just watched
she kept laughing

slammed the door
he could still hear her inside

“these fools
they don’t even realize
what they don’t know...”

he stood frozen
staring at the door

then shook himself
and wandered back to the garage

and closed his eyes

>

the next morning the air was bright and crisp

he rubbed his face and settled on a tree stump to wake himself up

the old lady bounded out of the house
dressed in a fancy hunting outfit with vest boots hat and equipment

she looked exhilarated

she and Buddy brought him breakfast and watched him eat
there was no mention of the previous evening

he sat on the tree stump and ate his food as they watched

“Buddy and i have some business today”

When she said the word “business” she held up a rifle and tossed it

with other equipment into the back of the truck.

“We need you to stay here and clean up the yard okay?”

“sure”

she did not mention the night before

his head jumped from current circumstances
making stories and connections

was this the start of a new life with the old lady and Buddy?
and if so
how long would that last?

she supplied him with various tools and equipment
a rake a shovel gloves and garbage bags

he got to work clearing up the junk in the yard
weird how they just stood there watching him

but Os attempted to ignore them and focus

then it seemed like Buddy decided all was okay
the dog barked
jumped in the back of the truck with the equipment

the old lady climbed behind the wheel and called out

“this yard better be spotless- and stay out of my house got it?”

she tapped the horn again and they rolled off

why did she say that?
like a challenge

as if she was daring him to enter the house

while they were away on business...

Os decided to put it out of his mind and focus on the work

he liked the cleanup work- it felt good to be accomplishing
to be useful however he could

but the warning about the house followed him around
pulling on him like a magnet

and stories kept building in his mind

his own body
not in time and space,
watching himself like a movie

this was the beginning of a bad pattern

Os listened for the truck and heard nothing
so he took a breath and moved up towards the house

the door was open
he passed inside

through a musty hallway
into a big living room
crowded with heavy furniture junk and knickknacks

he was on the hunt
not sure for what
another force pulling on him

but also common sense

*get out of here Os
the old lady will be back any second
she's got weapons you dummy*

and he saw something by the telephone
the old style with a wheel to dial the numbers

there was a pad of paper,
and scrawled in red ink
were the words

Hotel Medea, Room 17, 1000 Kolchis Rd.

he tore the paper off
shoved it in his pocket
and moved to the door
kind of dizzy

he stepped outside
the old lady was there
she swung a shovel and
whacked him in the gut

“what’s the matter Fool
can’t you follow instructions?”

he fell back on the porch
the wind knocked out of him

he saw Buddy on the ground
a smirk in the canine eyes

Os became furious
a rage like fire swept over him
he jumped up
shifted his weight

and tore the shovel from her old lady hands
she crashed backwards into some plants

“LIAR!” he stalked forward holding up the shovel

“ you know stuff you aren’t saying
about Medea
tell me the truth about this hotel
or i smash in your brains!”

she cried out
“ don’t kill me - i don’t know anything
it’s all just rumors
that’s all”

Os jabbed her in the ribs with the shovel
there was a force working on him now
turning him into somebody else

“what is this scheme
you think it’s funny to play around with me
who else is involved?”

“nobody
you mentioned that name
Medea
i heard about a hotel
so i dug up the address
i was going to tell you
i swear....
but Buddy told me not to”

“why are you still telling lies
i bet you never worked as a nurse either”

“Buddy you lazy mutt- HELP ME!”

but Buddy just sat back and watched them scrap
his canine eyes cold

Os threw down the shovel
she blinked and cried

he held out the paper
shook it in her face

“Where is this Hotel Medea? where is Kolchis?”

but she no longer spoke
dumb and blind
blinking up at the sky

Os thought to himself
this story’s made me evil already
Medea from the outside in
working on me
casting spells

i smash this old woman to the ground
i can’t stop

he ran inside
grabbed a pillow and a blanket

he carefully placed the pillow under her fragile skull
and draped the blanket over her body

this location was over

Os climbed into the truck
all the equipment was still there including the rifle

he started up the motor

Buddy just watched

>

in the story of Medea

if only
was the first line

if only

that we may second-guess ourselves back in time
scratch out words and regret

if only

who are these voices
haunting us

making impossible demands
placing bets on what we do

a mistake

mistakes follow their own logic

he knew well
that not every door is an opportunity

that needing to move is a virus
while time seeps in from the outside

suddenly the meaning of things
is obscured by too many words

nature has its own agenda

are you good with that Os?

a letter drops in your lap
you fall in some garbage
make your getaway

now where to?

he did not know
and with nothing to compare to

memories wiped clean

he was numb
and ruthless

in the old stories they told you how to behave
but now the gods were distant voices
to be ignored or dis- obeyed

he gripped the wheel
and yelled out the window

“what do you want me to do with this letter?”

he wasn't expecting an answer

>>

going up into the hills
in the dented blue truck
the terrain mean and boring

from rocks to road to sky

he searched the glovebox
with his free hand

there was a map and a wad of cash
he attempted to identify his location

he crumpled up the map
and tossed it out the window

discipline was not a part of this story
and anyway
it was too late to learn that trick

pictures flashed in his head
Os tried to erase each one

a picture is not a map
a map is not a location

you are in danger
before the campus
and now?

with no established routine

just words on paper

panic cut into him

in the story of Medea
a group of women called the chorus
follow her around

warning about the future

they act sympathetic
but it's just a tactic

to get close
and learn her motives

why?

are they jealous

we despise people who
try to understand

we survive by recording

Medea was exotic

Jason's fantasy
until he decided to “straighten out”

we invite disruption
then act surprised

maybe we are bored

tragedy is instruction
and entertainment

screw these old timers and their advice
we wanna live

as if they know better

dragging shadows
and bad memories

meanwhile reality
twists in on itself

>>

up ahead was a gas station
a busted shack with one pump

Os thought to himself
Ok
it's worth a shot

at least to get directions
or a snack

he swerved the truck sideways
parked
and hopped out

there were two identical weirdos sitting there

one looked Happy
and one looked Sad

they spoke in unison which was pretty odd



HappySad said,

“HEY that truck looks familiar,
where’d you get it from?”

Os looked at them a second
and then he said

“it’s mine-
my truck”

he forced a smile

“well that truck looks like Thena’s truck
she’s got a blue truck just like that one”

the two weirdos moved their heads in unison
speaking with bugged out eyes

“only her dog Buddy’s always in the back
hope that ain’t Thena’s truck

that would be Baaaaad”

“it’s my truck,” he repeated again
trying to make a smile again

then Os changed the subject

“ i have a question...”

“shoot”

“im looking for this place...
the Hotel Medea
ever heard of it?”

“OOOoooooh the Hotel Medea?” snorted HappySad
they froze and made faces
“ why you wanna go there?”
“i’m looking for somebody.”
“OOOoooooh ok!”
again with the melodramatic masklike faces
“do you know the place or not?”
“ never heard of it- sorry” and HappySad fell back on the bench
“Hey Mister!
You Got a Dollar for a Popsicle?”
HappySad asked with the Greediest of Smiles
he shook his head
and moved past them into the shack
a lady was at the register
frowning at a magazine
she heard the whole conversation
“ My Kids Bothering You?”
“ not at all-
we were just shooting the breeze”
what else to say
to this grim looking person
it was least friendly gas station in the whole world

so Os played the part of friendly tourist
browsing the shelves
he selected a hotdog from the case
dropped it on a bun
he went to add mustard
but the stuff in the jar was green
and covered with black fuzz
the cash register narrowed her eyes
waiting for him to complain
but Os held himself together
he moved to fix a fountain soda
this was a war
he walked up to the counter with his items
and the fake smile
“just this stuff and 20 bucks in gas”
she rang up the items with zero expression
then he asked
“i’m curious -
did you ever hear of a place called the Hotel Medea?”
“nope”
“ ok,”
and he counted out bills from the money he found
“you stay away from that hotel...”
her eyes narrowed again into slits

“so you heard of it?”

“ did i say that?”

“well if you are warning me not to go
seems you must know something about the place?”

“well aren’t you a regular smartass?
no wonder you make my kids nervous”

she nodded to the door
HappySad pressed their ugly mugs against the screen

“get outta here you damn punks!” she shouted

HappySad squealed and ran away

She shook her head
and sighed,
“gimme one of them reading glasses”

he grabbed a pair from the case
handed them to the cash register lady
she began to sketch a map on a napkin
stained with ketchup

“ go straight for a time
then take the first left
down that road til it splits
then right
another left
follow the bridge to the tunnel
there’s a detour at Kolchis Road
and the hotel is just after”

he could not follow these scratches on paper
the cash register lady caught his dazed look

and grinned

“if you can’t follow directions
just drive straight
maybe you’ll get there anyway”

“ thanks,” he nodded as if waking up from a dream
he drifted to the door
then stopped
smiled
and made a bow

why did he do that?

the cash register lady did not smile back

>

how are we to survive
in this surveillance state

by recordings

they aren’t even accurate
but it’s a shared language

a way to catch the signal

>>

when Os walked out of the store
HappySad jumped off the bench

they ran to separate sides of the parking lot
and performed a routine

as if rehearsed a million times
with bad acting

Happy held up a water gun
and aimed it at Sad

“i’m gonna get you “

“ O No Please Don’t Shoot!”

“it’s the Price of Betrayal!”

“but what about My Poor Desperate Life-
Don’t it mean anything?”

“NO it Don’t
not in the eyes of The Law !”

and Sad fell to his knees
shaking and sobbing for his life

Os watched this ridiculous scene
then Happy spun around
and sprayed him in the face with water

the two of them laughed like crazy

“ OOOPS SORRY !
Guess you got caught in the cross fire!” screamed Happy.

“Collateral Hit!” squealed Sad.

they laughed up a storm
their fat bellies bouncing under identical t-shirts

Os threw out the burnt hot dog
and got back in the truck

>

soon as he was back on the road
the sky cracked open

it was a rain without mercy
the humid air choked around him

he cranked down the window
jammed his head out

took heavy breaths
and tried to clear the windshield

he was going up in the dented blue truck
smoke blowing down the road
he needed a break

Os steered the truck into a ditch
scrunched himself into a ball in the front seat
and drifted

his dreams were silent
shapes without a story

a face was watching him
with a tricky look

when he woke up
it was cool and still

cicadas cut the night air
he had a bad headache

Os grabbed for the soda

gulped back the remains
it was warm and flat

he called himself back
revved up the motor and
moved back into the road

there is nothing so dangerous as extending hope

just then he heard a growl
and skidded to a stop

the headlights caught the figure of Buddy
the sarcastic dog from Thena's house
waving papers above his head in the road

was it the heat
the dehydration finally cooked his brain
or was he driving in circles the whole time?

there was no choice now but to take the apparition seriously

he opened the passenger door
and Buddy the Dog hopped inside

they watched each other for some time
then Buddy spoke

"well what're you waiting for-
get moving
you don't wanna be late"

"for what?"

"are you shocked to hear me speak?"

"no "

and it was true
hearing the dog speak merely completed a thought

it was a reminder about instincts
if a dog seems like it can talk
it probably can

"i'm not going back" said Os

"back where?"

"to her house- Thena or whoever-
your owner"

"she's not my owner
and i never said we were going there"

"so what
you hitch a ride with the guy who stole her truck?"

"ugh you are so clueless" sighed Buddy

"here I am making a giant effort-
for what?

not even a thank you
or a kind word
who knows why
maybe it's a personality problem
but still-
you could pretend to be grateful"

this dog really was a self-important asshole

"please O Wise Canine
what truth am i missing?"

“i can’t offer you any truth
but up ahead is a place
the Hotel Medea”

“i know- that’s where i’m going”

Buddy rolled his dog eyes

“so what’s your plan?”

“ i don’t have one “

“ then how do you intend to present yourself?”

“ i don’t know
haven’t thought about it
im dealing with the stuff right in front of me
doing the best i can”

“hey I’m a dog
not your therapist
i can’t help you with your stuff ok”

“so what do you want me to do?”

“we need to know what’s going on there
this hotel came out of nowhere
now everybody wants to be there
it changes people
we need you to check in
and figure out what’s going on”

“who is we?”

“not important
just do your job Os
keep your head down

be like a dog okay?”

“so you want me to investigate
but not too much”

“it’s about easy answers
that’s the opposite of the Hotel Medea
check in check out
gather the information”

“right”

“so what’s your plan?”

“ you tell me Dog”

“first we create an identity”

this was a sore spot for Os
being he invented his name
and had little confidence about the past

whether this related to personal problems
or murder
he had no idea

“what kind of an identity?”

“ see i’m practical
we know there are basically two kinds at a hotel
the workers and the guests
so you gotta decide

who you are
you got money?”

“not really”

“then it makes sense to get hired
Your Welcome”

the dog dropped a green folder in his lap
it flipped open
and Os saw a document
a resume with references

Robert Osmium- Professional Gardener

“we know that they need a gardener
so it should be easy to get hired
just keep your head down
and don’t say too much”

he wondered about Buddy’s motives
and now this falsified document?

“what do you get out of this Buddy?”

“i’m a dog
i use human language right now
but that doesn’t change my nature
to be loyal and helpful”

he had no reason to believe this information
but decided to go along with the plan for now

he reminded himself to be vigilant
to control his nerves
this need to connect
was dangerous

then Buddy said,

“you can drop me off here”

“it’s the middle of nowhere”

“i know where i am”

Os stopped the truck
the self-important dog pushed open the passenger door with his
snout

he looked back and grinned
“Good Luck Os-Guy!”

then Buddy howled
ran down into the woods

he peed on a tree
and disappeared

Os shook his said
pulled the passenger door shut
and started up the motor

there were too many questions in his mind

how much farther to the hotel
what was he supposed to do when he got there
how does a gardener act
and what kind of information was he looking for anyway

his brain shut down
and he focused on the road

>

at daybreak
it jumped out in front

the Hotel Medea
like a ship cut in half
formed of glass and steel

it hung over the road
looked ready to fall over
some kind of fancy design

the place looked familiar
maybe he saw it in a magazine or on tv
captivating
evil and tasteless at the same time

he steered the truck into the parking lot

a valet in a red uniform ran up
wiry and efficient with a bright gaze

“Welcome to the Hotel Medea Sir!”
the valet pretended the truck wasn’t a piece of crap

“i think i’m supposed to work here”

“then why are you in the guest parking lot?”

“i dunno
maybe i made a mistake
i need to speak to the manager”

“i don’t know about that
i park cars
go around back
somebody back there might know something”

he backed the truck up
steered around the parking attendants
who all watched him with cagy expressions

Os made his way into a narrow alley

some workers were smashing up the sidewalk
with giant hammers
he pulled up
and called out to them

“any of you know where the employees park?”

none of them answered
one guy shook his head
and they resumed smashing

he kept circling
until found an empty spot
way in the back
and parked

there was a heavy door and some dumpsters
just like at the Campus

people in suits walked outside
they didn’t look at him

Os caught the door
and walked through

he was moving through a corridor
into a kitchen

a maze of steam and activity
bodies flying around
people tossing plates
chopping and stirring

he called out to one of them

“i need to speak to the manager”

“this is the kitchen”

“ i’m here about the gardening job”

she shook her head
dropped a chicken into a pot

more steam rose up

she grabbed him by the arm
pushed him forward

into another corridor
up narrow stairs

and then nodded to a door

Os knocked

he thought to himself
am i messing up already
drawing too much attention to myself?

this hotel was a puzzle

there was a giant plant next to him
with spiky leaves

Os held the paper Buddy gave him
as if this document made him real

he was following the advice of a talking dog

>>

the hotel manager

the office was crowded with photos and trophies
it smelt like fried food and cologne

the manager was a small man in a big suit
beady eyes and a wide smile

Os introduced himself
and held out the paper

the manager studied the document
then looked at Os
his eyes moving from page to face

“professional gardener huh?”

“yep “

“ interesting you walk through my door
at the exact moment we need a gardener
coincidence
or a plan?”

“ good timing i guess”

“mmmhhhhmmmm”

he studied Os again

Os sat straight
wondering how to look like a gardener

the manager sighed

“well let’s not jump to conclusions

we need check your references
speak to other candidates

this is a competitive position
i hope you understand that fact”

“of course”

“but one question”
and the manager leaned forward in his giant suit

“when are you available?”

“ oh today of course” said Os

“ interesting”

the manager flapped the paper like a bird
and traced an index finger across his moustache

Os tried not to stare
but the moustache was outrageous

the manager made a strange impression
formal and ridiculous at the same time

there was something unpredictable in those eyes
the greedy mouth
the thin moustache
it didn't add up

“I should explain to you Mister ...Osmium...
this hotel- the Hotel Medea
is not like other hotels
our service
our rooms
and our employees most of all

we are renowned for our service
accommodations
and commitment

everyone who works here lives here as well”

he gazed up at Os

“How do you feel about that Mr. ... Osmium?
to live where you work?
is that going to be an issue?”

“not at all
it sounds perfect”

“ HMM
well...
you seem to be a perfect candidate
I've never met a perfect candidate before”

and they watched each other for some time

Os did not lean forward or back

then without warning
the Manager jumped up like a dancer

he matched his smile to his eyes

“let me escort you to our employee break room
a tour is in order while we verify your references
and complete the review”

“ok”

he followed the manager down a narrow courtyard

behind giant oak trees
to the employee residence

it was a flat gloomy building

the break room stunk of burnt coffee
with yellow walls
and furniture thrown around

a few workers watched tv
or sat in front of a board game

to the right
a girl lounged on a brown sofa reading a magazine
she was beautiful and wore sunglasses

“afternoon Jenny” chirped the manager

“uh huh”

“Jenny this is Mr. ... “

“Osmium”

“he is applying to be the gardener- a professional gardener”

“great”

she did not look up from her magazine

Os noticed two guys at a table
they used random objects as game pieces

keys a lipstick a dolls head and a pill bottle
perhaps items left behind by guests

the two jumped up and bowed when they saw the manager

“ Afternoon Sir!”

“At Ease You Goons!” laughed the manager

one of the fellows gestured to the game

“as you can see we invent our own fun”
they smiled and nodded their heads

the manager clapped

“Impressive! you see Mr. ...”

“Osmium”

“Yes- our staff is very disciplined
even as they relax they are working
discipline is essential
how do you feel about discipline Mr...?”

“it’s my middle name
i exercise every morning
for physical and moral health”

lies popped into his head now
he was becoming somebody else
knowing exactly what to say

the board-game-guys just watched

“Is that so?” the manager smiled

“ i too adore fitness-
we should exchange routines!
in any event- there you have it

our humble breakroom
an excellent place to relax
and associate with colleagues

if you are accepted for the position
meanwhile i invite you to enjoy a refreshment “

he gestured to the coffee machine
and some stale pastries on a plate
the Manager did a spin and waved

“Good Afternoon employees-
all of you are remarkable
doing remarkable work
at a remarkable establishment
Congratulations!”

Os watched the manager dance away
he hesitated
then sat near the boardgame guys

they did not play
and watched Os with contempt
neither spoke

he glanced at Jenny
she was still in her magazine.

“you worked here long?”

“ i don’t talk to people in this room,”
she said in a flat voice

“ok”

he tried to ignore the boardgame guys
and looked up at the tv

there was an old movie playing
with were sailors on an old timey boat
the costumes looked like underwear

there was dramatic music
as the boat was sailed through a passage

then rocks began to crumble and fall around the boat
suddenly it looked like a toy in a bathtub

the sailors were screaming
one old timer yelled at them

Keep Rowing ! Keep Rowing !

and out of the water
rose a Giant Man with a Fishtail

he threw up his mighty arms
and pushed back the rocks

there was triumphant music

the boat still looked like toy in a bathtub

“ you believe that”
said one of the board game guys

he didn’t know if it was a question or a comment

“this hotel is not like the others” Jenny explained

“how do you mean?”

she sighed
lay back and put the magazine over her eyes

at that moment
another man appeared

he was older
but very energetic
and held out a cardboard box

“ Robert Osmium?”

“that’s me”

“my names Jimmy
i am the head gardener
you will be working with me
welcome aboard”

“great”

“we start tomorrow at 8 am
do not be late
here’s a key for your room
and some welcome gifts
congratulations Osmium”

“thank you”

Jimmy nodded
and jogged back up the stairs

Os looked around at the others
nobody said anything

to be honest
he didn’t know if he ever had a job before

he was nervous

and excited

all he had was a fake resume
would Jimmy show him what to do?

he went upstairs
and found the room

it was more like a closet
with a small bed and a tiny window

he unpacked the box
which contained a pillow a blanket and a cactus

he named the cactus Fred
and Os thought to himself

i’m an employee now at the *Hotel Medea*

>>

the next morning
he was there at 8 am sharp

he followed Jimmy to the shed
where all manner of tools were kept

shovels drills lawnmowers rakes brooms
plus bags of dirt compost and fertilizer

the equipment gleamed as if brand new

Os nodded

Jimmy asked him
“so what job will you do first?”

Jimmy was sizing him up

Os grabbed some shears

“you know how to trim hedges professional gardener?”

“sure”

“then get to it
you can start by the pool”

>

he did his best to focus
trying to follow a straight line
the sun bore down on him

nearby two women lounged in the sun
with giant drinks

their makeup was thick
and they wore neon bathing suits
skin glistening in the mean sun

“did you hear?
she’s coming to do a show”

“who?”

“who do you think- Medea “

“so what?”

“you know what’s gonna happen

every time she does a show...”

“i don’t know “

“gonna be a shit storm”

“so what?”

“could be fun”

“or a disaster “

“or both”

they clinked glasses and laughed

Os stopped working and listened
the conversation mystified him

Medea doing a show
so she was a real person?

he could see her
or even meet her

his brain stopped
he wanted to ask a million questions

“when is this?
where does it happen?”

but he stopped himself
he wasn’t supposed to talk or be seen

the tension got into him
and he fell backwards
the shears smashed on the patio

the ladies leaned forward
making faces under their big sunglasses
he shook himself
and crawled like an animal
behind the bushes
his head was throbbing

*so what are you gonna do Os?
this is information
take control*

he leaned back against the fence

the truth was he wished he could forget
and just be a worker now

then he heard them gossiping

“what the hell was that?”

“babe all the people here are weird
especially the staff”

“cheers to that”

they clinked glasses

>

wearing a mask
covered in sweat
holding giant scissors

he couldn't jump out and yell at people

“ Who is Medea?
Why is she coming here?”

he did his best to finish his work
and keep his head down

>

later on he dropped off the tools at the shed

Jimmy was there

“so how'd it go?”

“alright i guess
just trying getting the hang of things”

Jimmy leaned in and said

“don't forget
it's not about the work
it's how you look
doing the work
understand?”

he nodded
but had no clue

Jimmy held out a package

“i forgot
this came for you

odd because people here never get mail”

“thanks”

Jimmy watched him
waiting to see the contents

and Os threw up his hands melodramatically

“well it’s been a long day
gonna head up and get some rest”

“sure” said Jimmy still eyeing the package

Os walked away

>

upstairs
he tore open the envelope

a blue phone fell out
with a note

*It’s Buddy
Call Me ASAP*

the dog was already in his business
and why did he need a phone anyway?

no doubt Buddy wanted reports

he dialed the number on the back of the phone

“Buddy Here”

“it’s Os “

“who?
sorry the connection is Bad”

“Osmium
the guy from the truck”

he could hear the dog
making fake static

“sorry can’t hear too well
better to meet face to face
same spot as before ok?”

“you sent me this phone
told me to call”

“i don’t know about that
these phones are not trustworthy
never know who’s on the line
meet you tomorrow
same spot as before”

he ended the call

>>

Os woke up in the dark
and went to the break room
he filled up a thermos

started up the blue truck
and coasted down the hill
the Hotel Medea loomed behind him
silent and gloomy

sheets of rain fell over the road

he didn't know if he could find the same spot again
and what was with this dog
some practical joker

in the rain and the dark
he could barely make out the road
every turn looked the same

keep moving Os
if only

then out of nowhere he saw Buddy
the sarcastic expression
the dog in a yellow raincoat
waving an umbrella

Buddy barked
and Os followed him down into a clearing

then just like that
the rain disappeared
and the air was cool and crisp

Buddy acted like they were best friends now
“ Hey Pal- so how's the job?”

“you said we couldn't speak on the phone
that we needed to meet
so i'm here”

“Hey i'm just being cautious
for your protection too
a lot we don't know
about this spooky hotel
and the people who work there...”

“yeah”

“but still
seems like a good opportunity
the pay is decent
and you get to work outside
plus it's a great cover”

“first you warn me to be cautious
now you act like it's a game”

Buddy twisted up his face

“it's most definitely a game
so play it well
and we all know
the only way to win
is by having fun...”

“ easy for you to say”

“think what you want”
said Buddy shrugging his dog shoulders

“you told me to find out
i heard there's gonna be a show
with Medea performing”

“What? Alright!
so our intel was correct”

Buddy snapped his jaws
and clapped

“excellent work Os Man!”

“ you want me to go?”

“why else did we send you”

“ who is we?”
Buddy ignored him
and produced a garment bag
as if from thin air

“ here ya go Pal
something to wear to the show”

he took the bag
and unzipped it
a brand new suit

“try it on”

“ i can’t wear this Dog
it’ll get dirty
not to mention that’s crazy
gardeners don’t wear suits”

“you still don’t get it Os-Man
you’re not doing that job anymore
i changed your identity
I’m Buddy
i know what to do

now you’re Os the Business Guy
that’s Buddy’s ways

yeah you’re welcome”

“this makes zero sense
people know me
they watch me doing a job”

“ you aren’t listening Os
i know stuff you don’t
i have influence
i am Buddy

anyway the clothes make us
you walk in with this bombass suit
everybody will react
and believe what you say”

Os shook his head
he started to change
Buddy turned his back for privacy

he couldn’t believe it
the suit fit perfectly

there was a rush
and he felt powerful
“ that’s what i’m talking about, “
growled Buddy when he turned around

“ Che Stile!
that’s Italian for how Awesome you look “

>>

it made no sense

a letter comes in the mail
with bad news

he tried to react
every move was wrong

now trapped by words
and people's ideas

he wanted to be independent
but his mind was not reliable

>>

standing there in the woods
the dog grinning back at him

Os did his best to act distant
but the suit had an effect

it was pushing him forward on his toes

“that truck is a piece of crap-
leave it behind”
explained Buddy

he led Os to a new car
to go with his brand new identity

a cold black sedan

he dropped inside
and slipped on sunglasses

he turned up the radio loud as possible
and blasted back up the road

this story with its own ideas

>

rising up in front
the hotel was different now

bigger
menacing
seductive

Os started feeling hyper
he was proud of himself for no reason

but the feeling took over

he was caught in this story
reckless and predictable

couldn't help himself

he jumped out of the car
tossed the keys to the valet

and swaggered up the steps
into the lobby

he stood in the center
enjoying the energy

the cheesy background music
people lounging with drinks
moving around and chatting

he liked the way the light
bounced off the marble floor

until a voice snapped him out of his trance

“Welcome to the Hotel Medea Sir
do you have a reservation?”

it was Jenny
the beautiful girl from the break room

her eyes were quick and dazzling
she looked right at him

Os walked up and gave his name
Jenny nodded
her hands flew across the keyboard

“Ok you’re all set
enjoy your stay at the Hotel Medea”

she caught him again with that gaze

Os looked down
and muttered thanks

she passed him a key and a brochure

“something else Sir?”

“ yeah well
i was wondering
i heard
is there a show happening?”

“ absolutely
tonight
in the Lounge
i can put you on the list if you like?”

he saw her face
she smiled

“that would be great
thanks “

>>

he rode up in the elevator to his room
and stepped out to the thick carpet

a buzzing sound
cut through the walls

Os stopped
he couldn’t decipher

was this in his head
or the hotel?

he thought then
maybe it was some kind of alarm

he went back downstairs
but everything was normal

he rode the elevator back up
there was no more sound

he walked towards his room
slowly

he observed the thick carpet
with gold designs

and thought

i can't stay here

>

a delirium passed over him

what was he supposed to do now
pretend to be a guest

wandering around
staring at the brochure Jenny gave him

to act like a guest
and also be anonymous
how did that work?

he observed the other guests

piling up plates in the dining room
lugging around golf clubs
talking on phones
lounging under the sun

they seemed worlds away
he wanted to hide

the brochure listed activities

but none of these appealed to him
he felt embarrassed

space was closing in
he wasn't going up to his room now

not after that sound
to become a guest was an outrage

he kept wandering
trying to be anonymous

don't talk to yourself
though he did at times

organize your thoughts
he couldn't

stuck to the corners
kept his head down
smiled or waved when he needed to

at one point he saw Jimmy pulling weeds
and moved back

was everybody in on the joke?

Buddy gave him this blue suit
was he really different?

it was a disguise or the idea of one
and what was the difference anyway

out by the pool
he found some dumb magazines
about leisure and lifestyle

he settled in a chair
gawking at strangers

he read without attention
smoked too many cigarettes
and floated

Jason

eventually the sun gave up
and fell behind the hotel
he wandered inside

through the lobby
and into the lounge

it was a dark room
trying too hard for atmosphere

with big light fixtures
and goofy chairs

the bartender nodded to him
everybody is your friend now

he sat down and stared at a drink

some people were messing with their phones
others doing small talk

one guy next to him nodded
a climber type
good looking
but worn around the edges

“ Medea’s about to do her thing,” climber guy grinned

Os nodded “so i heard “

“ you ever seen her before?”

“nope “

“ lucky you

name's JJ Jason
i work in boats"

"Os
i'm a gardener"

"hear it's a growing industry" climber guy smirked

he waited for Os to laugh
but he didn't

"so what kind of gardens?
you do all that stuff
with plants and fountains
what is that landscaping?"

what's the difference anyway
between a landscape and a garden
i wondered about that
is it money?"

"depends"

climber guy kept watching him
what did he want?

"here's my card"

JJ Jason flipped out his card with a practiced move

ShipShape Co, JJ Jason, CEO

he leaned in
his eyes flashed
boozy and over-friendly

"you like boats GardenMan?"

"sure boats are cool"
he lied
truth was water scared him

"course you do
everybody loves boats
you know why?"

he didn't wait for Os' answer

"i could talk for hours
about the design
and functionality of different boats
and i have
all the makes and models

but that's not really important
you know what's really important about boats?"

"not sure.."

"a boat is a symbol
understand that GardenMan
almost every culture has a mythology around boats
why is that?"

"you tell me... "

because a boat represents a shift
the open water
the movement
cutting into reality
embarking
sailing
you feel me?"

“i think so”

“and i don’t care what kind of boat
yacht
raft
tanker
rowboat
soon as you step aboard
there’s a shift
the energy changes
feel me?”

that’s boat energy
the anticipation
the world out in front
the salt air
risky and seductive”

“mmm”

“im preparing a fabulous new fleet right now
you might be interested

i guarantee people are going to be stunned by these boats
what they do and where they go”

his face was possessed
sharp and dramatic

the guy seemed kind of desperate
but also intriguing
Os was caught-
no way out of this conversation now

“well here’s to new adventures dude”

JJ Jason raised his glass,

Os too
they took big swallows

“say what was your name again?”

“Os “

“ right
so you never saw Medea before?”

“no”

“ let me tell you something
i am very disciplined
but every now and then
i like a little chaos
it’s my weakness

you might wonder
what’s up with this charming guy
the suit the shoes the watch
the badass boats

but chaos casts a spell

Medeaaaaaaaa
the way she moves
and sings
DAMN
if i could get her on one of my boats
that would be so cool”

JJ Jason flashed his eyes
Os leaned away

“she doesn’t perform too often anymore
they say she lives up on the top floor of this hotel

in a special suite

she only comes out every once in a while to do a show
last time i saw her by accident

now i have plans..."

"what kind of plans?"

"bro- we only just met
but something about you
i don't know you do i?
you seem familiar
but not
what's up with that?
anybody ever tell you that before?"

"no-
can i ask you something?"

"what"

"what's going on with this hotel?"

"how do you mean?"

"it's a little spooky right?" he faked another smile

JJ Jason nodded
"thing is GardenMan
this hotel makes big promises
it offers experience
fine

some people are like
ooh I wanna have an experience
but they really don't

they're not ready

it makes em nervous
i'm not nervous
are you nervous GardenMan?"

"maybe a little"

"this dude is honest
you crack me up"
then JJ Jason leaned in a little closer,

"here's what I know about this hotel
it's a little off
they work hard to put it together
but i see the cracks

i'm an expert
i'm in the business
they want you to get lost in experience
meanwhile they are watching you

don't forget that
we are on Medea's turf
she's watching you right now"

"how do you mean?"

"i don't know
with cameras and shit
didn't you notice they have cameras everywhere
what's up with that?
that's not security- cmon"

then he leapt up from his stool and kind of shimmied
drunken and hazy

“we’re living in Medeaaa time now”

Os looked around
to check if other people were watching them
noone seemed to notice him or JJ Jason
everyone playing their part

just settle into your blue suit
enjoy your evening
was that the point?
information or experience

he felt self-conscious
JJ Jason’s strange speech working on him
what did that mean
Medea could be watching him right now
he’d wondered about it before

“i need to ask you something”

“Ok”

“does she have kids- Medea?”

“how should i know?
i just saw her one time
i’m not some stalker
you’re kind of weird GardenMan
anybody tell you that?”

“it just seemed like you know a lot about her
from how you were saying”

JJ Jason shifted
“oh yeah? and how was i talking?”

he moved close to Os then

“listen,
i’m not gonna talk about this anymore
not here with you understand
i don’t even know you
you’re interrogating me
who are you
what’s your angle
GardenMan my ass

you wanna talk
meet me on my boat
now leave me the alone”

Os looked down
“sorry”

>

the lights dimmed
and the stage lit up
people went quiet
in anticipation

Os leaned forward

and Jason yelled

“Enough Suspense Already
Medea better happen!”

Os shifted in his seat
he had a bad feeling.

then Jason sat back down and looked at him,

“these fools
nothing works out how it’s supposed to”

he knocked back another shot
and gave Os a sideways look,

“HEY
sorry i was a dick before
somehow your face
you have this innocent look
it’s a dream face
damn
guess i’m kind of hammered Bro

but i don’t care
i wanna tell you something
are you ready for some JJ Jason knowledge
Yeah
im going to tell you now
because of your innocent face
damn
im making an ass out of myself

in this ruthless game
i don’t care
whatever you do
boats bicycles cooking gardening
it’s all the same
in regards to winning
winning the game
to be ruthless
and we are on this boat to win
am i right?”

“sure”

“ yeah

it may sound simple
but it’s not
and the price to win is desperation

to make yourself good and desperate
not from the outside
don’t let them see
every once in a while maybe
at the right moment
a little desperation
but otherwise
keep it inside
like a motor

the more ruthless
the farther you go

understand me?
now they want us to be respectful
which is code for weak
consider every move
the new propaganda
fuck that

end of the day
we’re just animals in clothes

he stared at Os thru dim eyes,

“i got nothing to hide from you
i came here to see Medea
you know why?”

“ tell me...” Os leaned forward

but right then the stage lit up
a shadow moved behind the curtains

people started whistling and shouting

the Manager walked out
the small man in the big suit
raised a stubby hand
and the room went silent

he tapped the microphone
and spoke:

“ Friends of the Hecate Lounge
Good Evening to You
and let me say we are so very grateful for your attendance”

“Get on with it!” yelled JJ Jason

the manager squinted out towards the audience
with a vicious smile

“as i was trying to say
we are sorry to announce
unfortunately
Medea will not perform tonight
there will not be a show”

JJ Jason leapt out of his seat
pushed through the crowd right up to the stage
jabbed a finger at the Manager

“ you know how long i been sitting here
drinkin shitty watered down drinks
and still
i got myself drunk
somehow

now i'm reckless
i'm JJ Jason

we wanna see Medeaaaaaa right now
you better make it happen!”

he climbed up on the stage
and pumped his fist

“Medea Now! No Excuses!”

people stared at him
nobody spoke

then two giants from Hotel Security
flew up onstage
they wrestled JJ Jason to the floor
and carried him away

still screaming like an animal

“ Medeaaaaaaaaaaaaa-
where are you?”

the room froze for a moment
then the bad music started up
and people resumed mindless conversation

the manager moved around passing out drink tickets

“so sorry for your trouble
enjoy some refreshment on us
there you go”

Os left

Jenny

he wandered back outside
into the night air

Jenny
the beautiful girl from reception
was sitting at one of the tables
messaging with her phone
everybody in their phones

she did not not look up
but asked
“so how was the show?”

“ it never happened
i guess Medea cancelled”

“ yeah
she’s like that- elusive”

“ you know her?”

she gave him a look then
her eyes were sharp
and dangerous

“ you could say that
she’s a friend of the family
she got me this job

but what about you?
one minute you’re the gardener
the next in your fancy suit
what’s your deal?”

he couldn’t hold back,

“i got a letter from Medea... i think”

“a letter?”

she leaned in
aimed that gaze at him

“what did it say?”

“ i can’t tell you right now”

“ooh so mysterious
at least you could invite me to your room for a drink...”

“i never went there”

“ ok scarecrow”

“what?”

she nodded and sang softly

“ if i only had a brain...”

>

they went up in the elevator in silence

he had this feeling now
swept up
in some kind of conspiracy
he kept looking around
watching the corners
but never saw any cameras

Jenny just stared forward
the doors opened

she burst out laughing
grabbed his keys
and ran into his room

he was lost
but also transfixed

Os stood by the door
listening
he knocked quietly

anxious not to draw attention
and he whispered

“ hey-
it’s me the scarecrow”

using her words
and it worked

Jenny cracked the door
peering back at him

“yes?” with that quizzical smile

the feeling of being in a game

he moved past her
dizzy
it was his room after all

the door shut
and Jenny punched him sharp in the back

he toppled forward
she pinned him with her knees

“what are you up to scarecrow?
why do you need to meet Medea?”

“i told you
she sent me a letter
or somebody by that name
i’m just trying to figure it out”

she laughed and rolled off him

he stood up
straightened his tie
like a scene from a bad movie

selected some bottles from the mini-fridge

he slumped on the bed
and fixed them both a drink

why was Jenny so confident?
what did she know about this situation

he wanted to ask her dumb questions like

do i seem alive to you right now?

and right then Jenny moved close
she whispered

“ you know what’s really funny?”

“ what?”

“ people always pretend to be innocent
they imagine themselves to be victims of circumstance

what’s happening to me

*where did this letter come from
what does it mean?”*

she flashed her eyes
he did not answer

then Jenny grabbed his face in her small strong hand

clicked off the light
and pulled him to the floor

her breath on his face

they rolled around in the dark
until there was no more thinking

>

all we invoke
and write down
circling us

on the trail
and blind

>

at daybreak
he found himself under the bed
and squirmed out
like a trained seal

Jenny was by the door
watching him

all business
with her coffee

you need talk to Medea”

“ what? “

“ about your letter”

“ how do i do that?”

“ maybe i can get you a meeting with Franki “

“ who’s Franki?”

“ her assistant-
Medea’s lapdog,”
she grinned

“ you know this person?”

“ i don’t know him
but i know people who know Franki
it’s worth a shot”

“i don’t get it
now you want to help me?”

she laughed

“you’re kind of entertaining scarecrow
and maybe i can use you
i have my own plans after all “

she smoothed out her hair

“ well

there’s work to do
so who are you gonna play today
the lawnmower or the fancy guest?”

his head was like mud
the suit didn’t work anymore

“i need to check on stuff “

“ okay scarecrow”

he didn’t know what to say
every move seemed wrong

“i need to see how this all fits together”

“ and if it doesn’t
am i supposed to feel bad for you?”

“ i didn’t say that”

“go and find Medea
talk to her about your letter
wondering why gets old”

Jenny set down her coffee
and left

>

he thought about it
when JJ Jason sang

we’re living in Medea Time Now
was that a joke?

Buddy gave him stuff
clothes
a new car
and he roared up the road
to see the hotel again

it was an opportunity

the pinball machine
back on campus
bling bling bling

he could learn to play
was that the message
what Buddy wanted

it made him feel sad
he understood the sadness
to be his worst quality

Jenny left her mark
they crashed into each other

she had her own ideas

now he just wanted to work
because work pointless
and boring

that wasn't happening anymore

>

he called the Dog
for some reason

“ Hey Pal
how did that suit work out?”

“ fine “

“ is somebody still in a mood?
well anyway your welcome..
so what's your status?”

“i did what you said
i checked in
made myself a guest “

“somebody there with you?”

“ no- why?”

“let me remind you Os
this assignment
involves important people
counting on you”

“ what are you implying?”

“i don't imply-
i'm just a dog
but people at this hotel
they have history
so be careful”

“i know that”

“sure you do
remember

i'm designed to be loyal
but priority number one is the plan"

"you're a model of canine trust"

Buddy snapped

"correct yourself Os Man
i can smell you changing thru the phone
losing focus
wondering what to do
fix that now
or don't say i didn't warn you"

"your wish is my command Buddy "

"did you see Medea?"

" she never showed "

" why no?"

" i don't know
they didn't give a reason"

"i don't like your tone
we help you with a job
accommodations
nice clothes
not even a thank you
but that's the way of the world now- woof"

he ignored Buddy's whining
"i'm on the hunt for leads
i think i can get a meeting with Franki
Medea's assistant "

" why didn't you say that before?
That's Amazing! "

Os went quiet
he wanted the conversation over

"here's my advice," said Buddy

"stay put in that room
do what you gotta do
order room-service
watch a movie
but don't go out - not yet
see if you can meet this Franki character
and be careful"

"not be possible Dog
i have work to do"
" did you not hear what i said?
she cancelled her show
that means there's a good chance
people are on to you

keep a low profile
wait for more information

see how this plays out
Good Luck"

and Buddy clicked off

>

in the Medea story

the warnings come in reverse

you can touch
but don't look

once you look
everything explodes

Medea is Magic
and Magical People are Bad

but we are obsessed with Magical People

is that our fault?

>

it was a mess

for some time he stayed in that room
trying to figure it out
weighing options

he turned on the tv
news people rambling about terror
flipped through the sports and reality shows
all of it noise

he knew then
i can't stay here

*this dog is not my boss
fancy suits and pep talks
do not solve anything*

so Os made a run for it
he dashed down the stairs

and out the back door

ran to his old room
in the employee residence

he stood there looking at Fred the cactus

JJ Jason said there were cameras everywhere
he still hadn't seen one

he changed into his work clothes
folded up the suit and
hid it under the mattress

he was chasing a normal pattern now
whatever that meant

to get back to work
the old routine

being a guest caused too much mayhem

if clothes can be a disguise
or a way to move from the outside in

he needed to change
and follow directions

he went back out and searched for Jimmy

by the shed
the pool
the golf course
the break room

the fools playing board games were still at it

“ anybody seen Jimmy?” he asked

they stared at him
like one of those wild west movies
the character walks in
and the piano stops

Os kept moving

at last he found Jimmy by the flower beds

but Jimmy looked different
exhausted and broken
Os felt responsible

“well look who decided to show up
i thought you disappeared”

“ i had to do some training”

“bullshit
you ready to work or not?”

“absolutely-
what are we doing?”

“what do you think gardenman ?
flowers”

Jimmy nodded at a pile of bulbs

“ you recognize these?”

“ uhh... “

“blood lilies-
Medea’s favorite”

“ ok “

“ know why they call em that?”

“ no”

“cause of the special fertilizer,”

Jimmy made a strange smile

Os didn’t want to know
he just wanted to work

Jimmy showed him how to plant each bulb

“dig a shallow hole
sprinkle in some of the fertilizer
then drop in the bulb
and cover- it’s simple

these lilies are Medea’s favorite
because they symbolize rebirth and purity”

“did you ever meet her?”

“ what are you talking about?”

“ i just thought...”

“ we don’t think
we do our jobs
we make this place spectacular
for the guests
that is all “

>>>

that night
he found a note under his door

by the elevator tomorrow at 1 pm

he figured it was Jenny

there were messages on the phone from Buddy
yappin about schemes

he deleted them all

was he finally done with the knowitall dog
ready to escape his bad advice

events were moving by their own power

as a projector spits out film
click click click

he just needed to follow

in the story of Medea
the characters keep talking

Medea stands back
and tells em what they want to hear

>>

the next day.
he and Jimmy barely spoke
they just worked

right before one Os excused himself
“ i got something i need to do”

Jimmy didn't answer

he did his best to clean up in the bathroom
then rushed to the lobby

and there was Jenny
cold and controlled in her work clothes

she passed him a paper
and whispered

“ floor 17
punch in the code “

the doors slid shut
he pushed the numbers
and the elevator shot up

when the doors opened again
he saw a speaker and a buzzer

Os pressed the button

a voice growled from the intercom
“ Who?”

“ it's Os the gardener
i have an appointment with Franki”

there was a pause
the door clicked
and Os passed through

this part of the hotel was different
blank walls
like a hospital or a tomb

behind one door
he saw people in suits and masks
packing up figurines into boxes

he leaned forward to get a better look

one of the people turned
caught his gaze
and slammed the door shut

Os moved on
to a large waiting room

he stood awkwardly by the door
wondering what to do

that's when the character appeared

tall and wiry with a giant head
a scowl cut into the pale face

white coat
matching shorts
and a pink tie

absurd and creepy

“are you Franki?”

“who's asking?”

then Franki raised a large hand

“No!
don't speak
we know already
we know every guest
and every employee “

“ok”

“do not interrupt”

there he was
Franki in the spotless suit

“i want to speak to Medea”

“you must be confused
nobody walks in
and demands a conference with Medea
not some groundskeeper”

Franki drew close
as if to threaten
inspect
or both
Os held onto himself

“you don't look like a gardener do you
what's the deal?”

NO

don't answer
we know already
still
what do you want
you here to file a complaint?”

“no- not at all...”

“then why bother Medea
she is extremely busy
as am i
her most trusted assistant”

“i apologize”

“ now he feels guilty
outrageous!”

Franki slapped a hand
to his high forehead

“it’s too late for feelings Gardener!
work is interrupted
the schedule delayed
people will miss deadlines
all because you can’t comprehend
the importance of this operation
oh well...”

“i just need a quick conversation-
i have some questions”

“ what questions?”

“they’re private “

“ how can your questions be private
if you never met her before”

“ i have a letter-
i think she sent it to me”

Franki stopped

the breath went out of him
and time stopped in that look

then snap
he forced a smile
and held out a large hand

his eyes were wild

“im happy to study this letter
examine it for you
to determine if it is appropriate
or relevant to Medea”

Os collected himself

“with all respect Franki
that will not be possible
i cannot provide the letter at this time
i actually don’t have it on me” he lied

“and even if i did
i can only share it with Medea “

“How Dare You!” sneered Franki

“the most impudent
and foolish employee
in the history of the Hotel Medea -
that he believes he can demand terms!”

the eye flashed
then went cold

he spoke quickly
without feeling

“you seem surprised we know things
we make it our business to know
how else to protect Medea ?

and by protecting Medea
we protect the hotel
and all who stay here”

“well i work here”

“are you sure about that-
and what exactly is your work?”

“i have this letter...”

“ your letter-
if it even exists
is no longer relevant
not for someone can't follow procedure”

Franki turned
and walked out
the door slammed behind him with force

>

Os stood blinking at the door
he realized Franki was not coming back

he said the wrong words

the True Story of Medea is a story of bad acting

Medea's on the ropes
absorbed in blood and fear
she almost falls apart

but then
almost by magic
she pulls it together
and exacts perfect revenge

and he thought
so what if your past is a bad movie?

a sailor with a spray tan and rippling muscles
the princess with fluttering eyes
a dance of seduction
until BANG
the door flies open
and blood runs down the walls

to be an actor
you better know what kind of movie you are in

horror romance thriller bad comedy

Os had no idea
Medea kept changing genres

with her poker face
this Hotel casting spells

he needed to know about the stories
were they real or just movies

if he figured that out
maybe he could leave for good

what would Jenny think
and why did he care so much

creeping around corridors like a ghost

>

back outside

he hid behind a tree
and called her

she acted like they were strangers

“can I help?”

“i tried
went up there
saw him
but Franki is impossible
he didn't listen to anything “

“im sorry
it seems like you got the wrong number
have a good day “

click

>

he called the Dog

“this is Buddy”

“it's not working DOG”

“ what are you saying?”

“i did everything you asked”

“ are you trying to play both sides Os Man ?
that never works
figure out what you want “

“easy for you to say Dog
i have to live with all this “

“remember the big picture
you get to meet Medea
and you will know”

“know what?”

“well
for one thing
if she killed you or not”

“and then what-
we make dinner and watch a movie?”

“maybe
families have different ways
that's what Buddy says

and isn't that the point?
to explore possibilities
in this mesmerizing
and remarkable hotel”

click

>

out there in the dark
pacing back and forth

until Jenny appeared
he scared her half to death

“ why are you ignoring me?”

“get away from me scarecrow-
i have a job
you may not care about that
but i do “

“ why did you send me to Franki?”

“i didn’t make you go”

she moved closer

“so what’s he like anyway?”

“disgusting
he doesn’t listen”

“ did you tell him about your letter?”

“i didn’t show it to him
and he got mad”

“ you play games”

“ i have to protect myself”

“by using people”

“ im not doing anything to you”

“whatever...”

“i mean it-”

he grabbed her arm
Jenny slapped him
hissed
and backed away

“stop crying scarecrow
gardeners are supposed to be tough
and ready to get their hands dirty

we know this hotel is diabolical
what did you expect from Franki-
a kiss
and an invitation for tea?

i thought you had some kind of judgement

you waltz in playing gardener
then mystery guest
oblivious
to all the other forces...”

“what forces?”

“ no- i don’t speak their names

i don't want that trouble
and im done with you"

jenny moved past him into the shadows

>

what about those family shows in the 1980's
the problem is always resolved in one hour
and with commercials for detergent and laughter

no blood
no silence

and what if Os was in the wrong movie
who could help him out of that now?

Jenny seemed to know everything
in her unreadable eyes
and mouth like fire

but she walked away too

>

Medea never acted the way she was supposed to

she gained power through evil
she was a monster
but also irresistible
and no body ever made out with Frankenstein

all actors depend on images

backstage
smearing on makeup
looking at the mirror

the mind flying ahead
ready to arrive

>

Os woke up in his room
the moon cutting up above him until

there was loud music
and the walls came down

a voice echoed

"it's time to play What do you know 'bout Medea?"

he looked
found himself onstage
in front of a packed house

Buddy was next to him
holding a microphone

What is this?

"Our first contestant folks
glad to see you dressed up for the occasion"

he made eyes at Os's pajamas
the audience laughed
Buddy winked

this couldn't be a nightmare
which floor of the hotel was he standing on?

“Ok first question
you ready?”

i dunno folks
he looks bout as ready as a glass of milk
but here goes

“what is the meaning of Medea?”

Os shook his head

“i repeat
what is the meaning of Medea?”

“it's a name “

“sorry
didn't hear you contestant”

“ it's a name”

“he said it's a name-
what do we think ?
i wasn't aware that cosmo was a name
so i guess he could be right
but no
WRONG

Medea is a word
and a name
more importantly
it means planner
or schemer in the ancient greek

interesting stuff- huh?”

Os just stared

“Oh well,” laughed Buddy

“let's try another

everybody ready-
here we go

What goddess does Medea worship?”

Os just stared

“I'll give you a hint”
said Buddy touching his earpiece

“it rhymes with picante
and don't say margarita... heheh”

Os just stared

The dog flashed his teeth
and muttered under his breath

“ what are you doing Os Man?”

he did not answer
he saw a door in front of him
and walked forward

the voice of the dog
the shrill laughter of the audience

it all faded out behind him
as he moved forward

he paused below the exit sign
then stepped out

>

Os wandered out
past the manicured lawns of the Hotel Medea

he was on a gravel path
next to a jagged cliff
overlooking the sea

he lost track of time
how long he was out there
he just needed to keep moving

the cool air and the wind felt excellent
so what if he was a little dizzy

and something caught his eye below

a bright shape in the water
a boat

he lowered himself down
among the rocks

this boat drifting in the water
with silver letters on the side

Zeus' Fantasy

he heard club music
pulsing from the deck

and saw JJ Jason in a silver track suit

stretching
chugging a power energy drink

Os moved closer

JJ Jason saw him

“Yo Dawg
Where Ya Been
Get Up Here!”

he fought his nerves and
let JJ Jason pull him aboard

JJ Jason smiled
and offered him a drink

“i didn’t mean to disturb”

“you’re not disturbing
you’re just in time”

JJ Jason made a move
in his shiny workout clothes

“are you ready?”

“ready?”

“yeah Dawg
this is gonna be life-changing!”

his eyes took on a wild look

“ don’t worry GardenMan
i forgive you
okay

you kind of ditched me back at the lounge

but i remembered our conversation
most of all
I remembered your face
and i thought to myself

i like that guy
there's a connection

so i'm gonna share something
it's important
and i need you to pay attention
you ready GardenMan?"

and JJ Jason unzipped his jacket
to show off his powerful physique

"i'm gonna teach you
JJ JASON'S ORDER OF SEQUENCES"

he flexed his muscles

" Don't Worry- i know
you're asking yourself what is this
what is he doing ?
and i'll tell you again

- it's the Order of Sequences

a revolutionary
psycho-physical workout
like no other
based on the geometry of thought and movement

to get you where you need to be!

i'm no fool GardenMan
the moment we met
i saw the sadness
the bewilderment
the struggle

and no
you don't need to feel ashamed

i've been there
i know Garden Man

at one point
i was lost

i thought it was over for me

but then i
JJ Jason
engaged my radical philosophy of fitness

i examined my desperate circumstance
completely

I used the tools
of creative critical marketing

i transformed myself
you wanna kno how?"

it was strange
to be on this massive ship
a halo of blinding light all around

JJ Jason in his shiny workout suit

"i worked and i worked

i examined
i moved
i investigated
and then i realized

JJ JASON'S ORDER OF SEQUENCES
Let's Go!"

JJ Jason pressed a button on a stereo
club music blasted out

he began to hop and skip
throwing out his arms

" Watch how i move GARDEN MAN
how i re-define
time and space
on my terms

Hell Yeah
Here We Go

it's The Order of Sequences Y'all!"

he turned up the music
and thrust his body

and JJ Jason shouted out
"PILLAR!"

and instantly he became a pillar

he shouted out
"TRIANGLE!"

and JJ Jason became a triangle

he shouted out
"CUBE!"

and JJ Jason became a cube

" you see what I mean Garden Man?

the integration of the thought process
with the body

those old timey philosophers talked about it
I'm doing it !

each shape leads to perfection
the mind and body talking to each other
synced up
precise
on all levels

this is what is possible
when we go beyond thinking

whatever feelings people fall into
it's noise

but the Order of Sequences
brings us back into focus

we unify with the patterns
and become what we need to be!"

he kept twisting into different shapes
eyes charged with certainty

" we fight against disorder
all these sick tormented types
with their nonstop questions

it doesn't have to be so complicated
thinking
and talking about shit
until you can't even do anything
fuck that

we cut through noise
by the Order of Sequences
our bodies transform
we are hot
we are fit
life is happening"

Os observed the figure
spinning on his head

transforming from one shape to the next
as he described his philosophy
or anti- philosophy

the sun was too bright on the water

>

the next move was obvious
Os went to the employee break room and got drunk
with the other bozos

actually he pretended to drink
and watched em play their made up game

moving around random objects
a dolls head, a coin, a key, a lipstick on the board

he couldn't help himself
he tried to play it cool for some time

then asked foolishly
" what are the rules to this game anyway?"

"what do you care garden man?"
one of the players sneered

>

he went back outside
maybe he would just sleep

the trees casting shadows as the sun dropped behind

out of nowhere Jenny appeared
her face twisted
crying
she pushed up against him
and whispered,

" i'm sorry, i'm really sorry"

" for what?"

she pressed up against him
with her small strong body
and they fell behind a tree

he didn't want her to think he was insensitive

" should we go somewhere?" he whispered

holding onto her but looking around at the same time

“ it’s not fair what she did to us” Jenny said

“ what do you mean?”

“ no more questions”

and she looked up at him with fathomless eyes

the dark spread around them
rules and worries faded

“ i’m with you scarecrow”

he tried to speak
Jenny bit him on the mouth

>

he woke up under a tree

Jimmy was standing over him
Jenny was gone

“ guess you had a night “

for a brief second
he wondered again about cameras and recordings

this ridiculous effort to move around in secret

Jimmy looked beaten up

“i was waiting for you!”

“ sorry Jimmy
i got caught up”

“ you keep saying that
then you run off whenever you feel like it
this is a job
it’s important
at least to me
keeping these gardens clean and orderly
for the guests and the staff
they depend on us

working our asses off to protect beauty
but maybe you aren’t serious about that

and now
with this disaster happening
when i needed help the most”

“what’s going on ?”

“what’s going on?

a plague
of bugs
they’re eating up all our plants
i was trying to fight em best i could
i just hope we don’t lose our jobs”

he followed Jimmy back by the flower beds

a cloud of bugs
drifted down
a metallic buzz cut into the air

“ enough talk Osmium
or whoever you are
it’s go time
you with me or not?”

and Jimmy strapped on a can of bug spray
handed another can to Os

Jimmy looked beaten down
but also kind of crazed and fierce

then he ran forward
into the cloud hollering

“ In the Name of Medea
we shall cut you down!”

“ Jimmy wait!” Os called after him

he shook himself
strapped on the can of bug spray
and ran after Jimmy into the cloud

the sound was brutal
he couldn't see anything
just bugs teeming all around

but he heard Jimmy

“ Spray em ALL!
Spray em all Dead!”

Os did as instructed
he lifted up the nozzle
aiming bug death in every direction

“Be Gone ye Devil Bugs!”

after some time
the cloud dispersed
lifted into the sky and faded

he saw ruined flowers everywhere
stems poking out from dead soil

a crowd of guests was assembled now
just watching

how long were they standing there?

he saw Jimmy on the ground
holding his face

“ Jimmy- what's the matter?
you OK?”

Jimmy cried out

“ no im not
you shot me in the face
you blinded me you bastard!
we went in there to kill bugs
and you blinded me!”

he wept

“ all my life at this hotel
working like a dog
for beauty
for Medea

i struggled to make these grounds
perfect and beautiful
now i can't see a damn thing
it's the final joke
everything i worked for is gone”

then Jenny moved out from behind the guests
she wrapped a blanket around Jimmy

and tried to wipe his face with cloth

“ get your hands off me!”

he slapped her away
jumped up
and screamed

“ a curse on this hotel-
this hotel is cursed
and i curse it back!”

right then the manager stepped out from the crowd
he threw up his hands
as if to block the scene from the guests

some security guys swept around
picked up Jimmy
and carried him away
still ranting about curses and violence

the manager fixed his face on the crowd

“ Dear Friends
Guests
Guest Friends
our sincere apologize for the disturbance

and i want you to know
this will be taken care of immediately

everyone here is safe
everyone must be safe at the Hotel Medea

our guests are exceptional
and
our staff is exceptional

they provide phenomenal service

and they are compensated
and protected

this man will receive expert care

he will recover
we will all recover
this hotel is our refuge

so please
enjoy yourselves
that’s what all our workers want for you
what they work for

and the manager held up tickets then:

“Free Drinks on the Patio People!”

the guests murmured and moved away

Os waited until everyone was gone
and resumed his work

he did not stop

bagging up dead flowers
clearing the ruined soil

he started over
following Jimmy’s instructions to the letter

planting each seed with care
adding moisture and mulch
replenishing the earth

he recalled Jimmy's ways
until a message came up on his phone
"the manager would like to see you"
he knew he was going be fired
and accepted this fate
empty in his brain and heart
Os walked back to the manager's office
knocked and went inside
the small man in the big suit
spun around in his vast leather chair
" Ahhh Osmium
how are you?"
" listen Sir
i'm so sorry for what happened"
" Stop!
there is nothing to apologize for
we know who you are
we see you
never forget that
and this unfortunate event
is not your fault
ok your former boss
meant well
but this was practically
a suicide mission
and those bugs
what can you do?"

he looked away for a minute and then turned back

" we know you are a phenomenally dedicated
and important worker
here at the Hotel Medea
we know about you
don't worry about that"

the manager leaned forward and winked

" your former boss was a good man
but he was not up to the task
so it's time to move on"

" what happened to him?"

"who?"

"Jimmy"

" he's gone "

" gone?"

" we let him go
with severance pay of course
but let's not dwell on circumstances beyond our control

your future is here
at the Hotel Medea!
focus on that
you must focus on that!"

and then the manager produced a badge
as if from thin air
he stood

leapt around the desk
with remarkable grace
and pinned the badge on Os' uniform

“ As manager of the Hotel Medea
i promote you to the office of Head Gardener

he lay a stubby hand on Os' shoulder

“ so proud of you son
and now
your assistant

Ralph get your ass out here!” growled the manager

a door opened in the wall
and Ralph walked out

a small muscular individual
with close cropped hair
and blank eyes
he nodded to Os and the manager

“ Ralph will be assisting you in all your tasks
he is amazingly talented and committed “

then the Manager shouted at Ralph like an animal

“ remember this guy is the Boss now
you do whatever he says”

Ralph nodded and bowed

“ Thank You Both
Good Bye”

The manager opened a squeaky drawer in his desk

and produced an enormous hero sandwich

his eyes glowed, “ Mmmmmm yes”

Os stood by awkwardly
after a moment
the manager looked up from his lusty sandwich

“ I don't understand
why are you still here?”

“i'm sorry Sir” stammered Os

“ i told you
to stop with the damn apologies!”
the manager glared at him with those insufferable beedy eyes

“ i'm not sure i deserve the position

“ enough
you earned the promotion
you do your job
that's how this hotel works”

and the manager slammed his fist
down on the desk for added emphasis

“ remember the Hotel Medea
belongs to a different order”

“ you mean like an Order of Sequences?” asked Os

“ what the fuck are you talking about?
don't make me second guess your promotion
move on Gardener !
and lemme eat my lunch in peace”

the manager spun around with his sandwich
and began to gobble with loud grunting noises

Os slumped and walked outside
Ralph followed him

>

he tried some small-talk with his new coworker
Ralph never answered
just nodded and smiled

Ralph worked like a machine

after some time Os gave up
he tried to put the events of the day
out of his mind

exhausted
he made some pitiful excuse
and left Ralph to clean up

he went back to his room
lay down
and stared out the window

well you have a name now
and a job
try to be grateful for that

and he shook himself

>

there was a knock at the door

Jenny standing there with flowers

“ Congratulations!” and she pushed her way into the room
started arranging the flowers on his window

suddenly Os felt nervous around Jenny
he didn't want her in his room

“ what are you doing here ?”

“ we're celebrating your promotion honey”

“ promotion ?
it's a disaster
i hurt Jimmy
and he lost his job”

she frowned at him,

“ you turn everything negative
why are you so scared to live ?”

“ i don't know about that-
Jimmy was my friend
i let him down”

“ Jimmy will be fine
don't worry about him”

“ do you know where he is?”

“ no”

“ then how can you say that?”

Jenny grabbed his face then
in her small strong hands

and gave him a fierce look

“ get over it Os
do what you need to do”

>

he followed her outside

Jenny threw an arm around him
as if all was perfect and wonderful now

making jokes
laughing
poking him in the ribs

how could Jenny be so confident

they walked past the the trees

it was getting colder
and Jenny leaned up against him

Os was still confused about her motives
but it didn't matter

she knew about him
Jenny understood him
and for now
or perhaps always
everything depended on Jenny

he did his best to act calm

with this animal thought in his brain
will she throw me down?
or if i lay down

will she fall on top of me

Jenny turned to him with a smile

“ you still here on planet earth scarecrow?”

“yeah”

her face lit up with mockery
and affection

“ i want you to meet the cleaning lady”

“ ok”

“ she knows things-
i think she can help us with our situation”

our situation ?
so they were together somehow
it terrified
and made him feel ecsatic at the same time

“the cleaning lady and Jimmy
used to be married”

“ used to be-
does she know what happened to him?”

“ how should i know-
it's not important
but she can help us “

they walked past the employee residence
to the cleaning lady's place

a big shed crowded with shelves

all kinds of figures, potions and supplies jumbled together
in the center under a naked bulb
sat the cleaning lady
playing cards

“ this is all her place?” he asked

“ shhh” Jenny covered his mouth

the cleaning lady did not speak
examined her cards
and pointed to folding chairs in the corner

Os and Jenny approached
and sat down quietly

“ so this is your friend eh Jenny? “

the cleaning lady said the word friend like an accusation
she didn't look up
hunched over her cards in a rough apron
and scarf

Os observed her face
it was smooth and soft
like a younger woman
playing the part of an old woman

she flipped the cards
scooped em up
and reshuffled

“ people are talking about you
wondering about your agenda”

Os got frustrated
and couldn't hold back

“ i don't have a plan
im just trying to answer some questions”

“ okay
then my question is
who were you before this hotel?”

he looked down
“ i can't say”

they sat in silence
the cleaning lady tossing and flipping cards

it was hypnotic
he almost forgot where he was for a moment

the odor of cleaning products
stinging his brain

“ can i ask you something?”

“ why not ?”

“ i heard you were married to Jimmy?”

“ what do you care about Jimmy?”

“ i worked for him
i feel responsible
i need to know if he's okay?”

she looked up then
cast a shrewd eye over him
in her old lady costume

“ focus on your own situation Garden Man
you are pretty close”

“ to what?”

“ finding out what you want to know
maybe
and that makes people uncomfortable
or greedy”

“ i don’t understand”

Jenny poked him in the ribs ,
“ stop interrupting her “

the cleaning lady cackled
“ yeah stop interrupting her!”

in the halo
of the hanging bulb

she threw up her long delicate fingers
they didn’t look like worker’s hands

“I see all
I know all
I clean all
you think that’s a joke Garden Man?”

“ no”

“ well
whether you realize it or not
you do possess qualities
in spite of our stupidity
or because of it
our qualities are bigger than we are
but if you don’t live up to your qualities
it’s useless

or dangerous
understand?”

“ not really-
can you be more specific please?”

“ you understand more than you let on
Garden Man

it’s time to do what’s necessary
and get the show started
that’s what im saying”

it was difficult to breath
but he had this dumb need to act tough
and certain in front of Jenny

“ yah
thanks for the advice”

the cleaning lady resumed with her cards

“now get the fuck out of here
and leave me be”

she poured herself a drink and pointed to the door

Os and Jenny got up and left

back outside
Jenny asked him,

“ do you know what she meant?”

he didn’t answer

they walked in silence for a time

>

what reverberates
he thought of the sound he heard upstairs in the hotel

he thought about Jimmy

his nerves were ruined
he gulped back more air

Jenny laughed again
resumed her playful attitude

there was something ruthless about Jenny
her joy

people need to feel joy
they will do anything for it

Os couldn't blame her

" why did you go this hotel Os?"

" i told you-
to find out about this letter"

" you're such a baby
but i can't resist you scarecrow

i want to help you-
we have a connection"

he looked away but listened intently
didn't want her to see his face

" here's what i know
up there in Medea's office

there's a statue on her desk
a statue of the goddess

i want that statue
it's got powers."

"are you serious?
you dont really believe that nonsense"

" course i do
if you want to be with me
you better get me that statue

you never learned anything
wandering around like a ghost "

"that's not true
im trying

you really think i'm a ghost ?"

"just get me that statue"

>

we don't actually know
if Medea had a choice

or what was going through her mind
looking into the eyes of innocent children

they weren't exiled like her
just a means to an end

she needed to land somewhere
she needed to make her point

these bodies fly through space
we run to catch up

hope we don't crash
and cut deals to get to the other side

Medea is homeless
she needs to land somewhere

she keeps talking about
sending people home

it's a turn of phrase
or a sick kind of a joke

blaming the gods and her "evil-hearted" schemes

Medea means schemer
so end of the day do we fulfill our names

how much are we in control of that

>

a body and its concepts
like a radio
searching for a signal

static is not noise

the next morning Os opened his eyes from dreams

Jenny was there

"I want that statue
if you want to be with me

you'll get me that statue"

>

he left Ralph a list of chores

Ralph just nodded
his face tight and blank

who was this character
maybe Ralph was in cahoots with the manager

it didn't matter
he couldn't worry about that now

a story with its own reasons

and he went back to his room
put on the suit Buddy gave him

he didn't have the right shoes anymore
so he kicked off his work boots

and walked barefoot to the lobby

looked around for a second
nobody seemed to notice

Os took to the second elevator
punched in the code for floor 17

and went up

the doors slid open
he pressed the bell

and the speaker crackled

“Who?”

“it’s Os”

“ No Garden Man
We are Busy”

“I have the Letter”

there was a pause and the door clicked open

moving through the blank corridors again
he looked for the people
packing up merchandise in boxes
but all the doors were shut

Os came to the waiting area

Franki was there

unsmiling Franki in his pretentious outfit
jacket shorts and green bowtie

“ nice tie Franki”

“i don’t have time Gardener
show me this letter
or move one”

“ whats going on back there Franki?”

“what?”

“ with all the statues”

“don’t worry about it Gardener
enough time was wasted
give me the letter- now”

“ I have a different arrangement”

“you don’t have any leverage”

“ course i do Franki
you’re the one standing here
sweating to see a piece of paper

what is it-
the give away?

the handwriting or the words
who knows
but it seems very important to you
and maybe her?”

Os brought out the crumpled envelope from his pocket

“I want to trade it for Medea’s statue”

“ what?”

“ the one she keeps on her desk”

“ you’re out of your mind Gardener
there’s no statue
and if there was
how could it be equal to a scrap of paper

some precious artifact and a letter
you've got to be kidding
Let me see that letter"

Franki lunged forward with his giant paw
Os swiped the letter back just in time

and Franki stumbled

" i could finish you off in a second Gardener
but you're not worth it"

" where's Medea's office?"

" what?"

" i wanna see it"

" that's impossible"

" if you want to see the letter
i want to look at the office
it would be interesting for me
as an employee here
to see the office
of such an important
and high official"

Franki fumed
it seemed momentarily
he might explode
he walked back and opened the double door

Os moved forward

" don't go in Gardner
stand at the threshold and look"

" whatever you say Franki"

he walked up to the door
and looked inside

a vast office
the carpet was plush and pink

the room stretched so far back
he could barely see
but there at the back

was a large desk
covered in papers
he thought he saw a statue
or a paperweight

he kept looking
hoping to catch her presence

angry unsettled confused
but he did not move

wouldn't give Franki the satisfaction

then Os nodded his head

Franki pulled the door shut and spat

" give me the letter insect "

" change of plan Franki
my friend JJ Jason's got a big ol boat
just behind this hotel

he's a huge fan of Medea's

been waiting forever to see her

now he wants her to do a show
on his boat
it will be awesome
i know Medea loves attention

she better show up
and bring the statue
then we hand over the letter

and everyone is happy

we'll be reaching out
OK Franki!"

he turned
and started to walk back

then heard laughter

not Franki
but through the door

"What's that?"

Franki shrugged

"i don't know"

"Who's on the other side of the door Franki?"

"I don't know Gardener
you seem a little out of it

you come here so sure of yourself
now you're hearing things"

Os stared at the door
gulping and sweating
choking on his words

then he fixed an eye on Franki
and spoke
loud
so any other people could hear
through the door

"if you want the letter
she comes and does a show on the boat
and bring the statue"

Franki just looked at him

>

Os moving through the corridors of the Hotel Medea

floor 17
blank walls

his mind buzzing with stories
fragments of a plan he was trying to pull together

before you were weightless
what is holding you together Os

so tired
unsure if he could follow through

what choice did he have

then he saw the open door
Os looked around

and wondered
are they watching and who cares anyway

can you be scared
and not care at the same time ?

>

he went inside the empty room
there piled up on a table was a mess of statues

bad fakes designed to look old
what is this

Medea playing tricks again
some shitty export import business- so be it

the story working on him again
he had the feeling like when he entered the old lady's house

walking forward
knowing he wasn't supposed to but

he grabbed one of the statues
slipped it under his coat

“ don't you dare Os
put that back “

he heard the growl
and spun around

Buddy standing there
in a bright blue Hawaiian shirt
and sunglasses

“ what do you want Buddy”

“ well i decided
why should everyone else have all the fun
i decided to visit the hotel myself?

what are you doing here Os?”

“ i was visiting Franki”

im just here enjoying the hotel
why should you get all the fun?”

“ okay- well i need to get going”

and Os moved to get past him

“ put that statue down!” Buddy growled

he stepped back

“ what do you care , Dog?”

“ you were given instructions Os
you've never been loyal
not to me
not to anybody
i tried to help you
i really tried
and you went rogue
it's sick
really sick
but what the hell

i can't help you anymore"

"that's fine Dog"

"what's the greek word" smirked the dog

" hubris - like when the kid tries to touch the sun?"

" shut up Dog!"

Buddy growled,

" Gimme That Statue!"

" No fucking way!"

and Buddy leapt towards him fangs bared

they toppled back on the carpet
a mess of arm legs teeth and claws

Buddy biting and scratching

Os wouldn't let the statue go

he threw himself backwards

and the dog flew up above him

there was a crash
as Buddy smashed through the window

the dog gazed back at him
a momentary look of fear

a cartoon character floating in air
then Buddy plummeted

Os pulled himself up
arranged his suit

he was covered in blood
he wasn't sure if it was Buddy's or his own

he walked forward
barefoot in the blood stained suit

and for the first time in what seemed like centuries

he smiled

>

so what happened to you

the confluence of memory and time
the two animals always chasing us

until snap you got bit

Os smiled to himself
wandering through the corridors

of the Hotel Medea
covered in blood

>

it came together fast

he found himself in a board room

before big shot financiers
doing his presentation
*“this will be a trip like no other
Medea Temptation Tours”*
he flashed through the slides
words came easy now
he knew what to say
knew what promises to make
the big shots nodded
dollars and fantasies glowed before them
their eyes gleamed
Os held out his hands then
dramatic
Medea would be proud
“Medea Temptation Tours
THIS WILL BE the trip of a life time
experience will open up People
everybody sets out on this fabulous ship
out to this magic island
and there is hell of a party-
actually it will be party after party after party
and then the BIG FINALE
Medea performs

a show like no other
raucous wild and fun
and Why?
because Why Not?
because
we refuse to shrink down
we are not a categories
or codes
or even names
we are willd because we want to be
so do you dare set sail with Medea ?”
the light came up
the financiers leapt from the table
and cheered
dollars signs lighting up their eyes
they folded up papers
grabbed Os
shook his hand
slapped him on the back
they moved out chattering about the Big Plans
JJ Jason gave him the thumbs up
Jenny nodded

Franki said nothing and walked out
fuck that asshole

Os was on to something now
he was putting plans into action

no more thinking
saying the right words

and making stuff happen
that was the important part

>

afterwards Jenny came to him

she was looking at him different
what he wanted to happen

she looked nervous
but also excited

“this all depends on Medea
so what if she doesn’t show?”

“she has to show Jenny
they saw the letter

they know i have the letter
and i’m going to get your statue for you too”

he was dizzy and excited too

“you will see
i listened to what you said”

“okay scarecrow”

“stop calling me that Jenny”

“im never gonna stop calling you that”

“but you were right though
soon as that cleaning lady spoke to me

i knew what to do
the way forward opened up”

>

this dream kept coming back to him

he was back on campus

but this time not drifting
he had weight

he was Osmium for real

the cook was gone and it was on him
to cook for everybody else

he looked around at plates piled up
raw meat and vegetables rotting on the counter

he thought to himself

tragedy is not something that just happens

it tricks you into following through

makes you think it's what you wanted all along

>

the Big Day arrived

out there in the water

he saw the gleaming ship in the harbor

passengers lined up with their tickets

giddy in their vacation outfits

dragging luggage and gossiping about all the fun
and bad behavior ahead of them

some were already taking shots

Jenny was checking people in

running back and forth
talking into radio

making small talk
doing her killer smile

Os just watched

he set this in motion

what are you supposed to do
was it enough

he still felt nervous

then JJ Jason rolled up
in a 6 figure sportscar

the doors swung up
JJ Jason slid out in an all white suit

strolled past Os
and glanced over gold sunglasses

“don't fuck this up garden man”

>

that's how this all started
a boat drifting out after dark

passengers gathering in the ballroom

JJ Jason was in the booth
flailing his arms

making shapes
spinning his favorite records

“it's the order of sequences y'all!”

his voice boomed

Os saw bodies twisting on the dancefloor
faces inebriated with all kinds of fantasies

he thought to himself

damn- is it enough to make a name for yourself
an impression

the moment when you finally land
and stand in your spot

or is that the worst lie
that there's actually spot waiting for each of us?

people want to enjoy
fill themselves

experience themselves in space

a party is just one opportunity

Os felt nervous
watching himself from the outside

but kept moving forward
that was the thing

then Jenny grabbed the microphone...

he was startled at first
but it made sense

“Alright Everybody!”

Jenny's voice was raspy from cigarettes
and adrenaline

“ How Do You Feel People
I SAID HOW DO YOU FEEL?”

voices roared

“Are You Wild?”

they cheered

“you better be wild
because we refuse to shrink down

we are wild !

it's remarkable
heading out into uncharted territory

on Medea Temptation Tours

Hell Yeah

and who knows what is going to happen to us ?

i'm excited and a little scared to be honest”

JJ Jason crossed over to Os

“what the fuck is she talking about? “

“ what i really want to know,” crooned Jenny
is are you enjoying?

that's essential

we are animals right ?

and that's a question only tragedy can answer
how to deal with our wild animal selves

we gotta stand in the middle of it somehow”

JJ Jason snarled

“ will you shut her up!
she’s killing the mood
out of her mind or drunk or both!”

then Jenny turned
and pointed a finger at JJ Jason
a spotlight fixed on him

“ EVERYBODY
let’s give it up for our host JJ Jason
and his bombass boat
bombs away baby !”

JJ Jason forced a grin
and waved

the crowd cheered

“and what about this other character
a mystery guest

none of us would be here without Osmium

Give it up for Os
the Scarecrow Boy!”

the spotlight swung over his face

he put a hand up to shield his eyes
and shrunk down

Jenny shushed the crowd
and kept going

“so much ahead of us
adventure

intimacy
and mystery

a special trip
for special people

you all must be special to be here
Right?

because you paid for it
Right!”

the crowd cheered and clapped

“well i have a message for you from Medea”

she flapped an envelope in the air

Os and JJ Jason looked at each other

“ that’s right- i got some Medea Mail “

Jenny unfolded the paper
and cleared her throat

“dear friends

where there’s fire
there’s smoke
that means reckoning

all of you awoke
to something beckoning
new realizations in fire

and what is required

that we begin again

the pulse of power
its message is fire”

then Jenny held up a box
and pressed a button

a blast ripped through the ballroom
the walls shook

smoke filled the air

bodies were thrown down
people screaming
crawling on all fours

or just blasted apart

Jenny pressed the box two more times

a chandelier crashed to the floor
one of the walls exploded

“you fucking psycho!”
screamed JJ Jason

he jumped on her
threw his hands around Jenny’s neck

Os recovered himself
and kicked JJ Jason to the floor

he grabbed Jenny and dragged her towards the exit

it was a panic of bodies
flames blazing in all directions

he thought to himself
be careful who you follow now

that’s when Jenny slapped him

“ let go of me!”

“ what have you done to us Jenny?”

“c’mon
i know where to go”

they ran past people
jumping overboard into the dark water

charred bodies
the pleasure cruise was now damnation

they climbed down a rickety ladder
into an old motor boat

and sped away

JJ Jason’s Boat
the fantasy cruise
burning behind them

flames reflecting in the dark water

>

this was supposed to be about
finding yourself in a project

when people get excited
that means life is happening

somehow the calculation was way off

she passed him a bottle

“ shut up and drink”

in the tiny boat
motoring forward

Jenny steering

she had some destination in mind

he didn't believe it would play out like this
he expected to be a big shot

make a name for yourself in this world
land somewhere

and then unwittingly
you are part of the problem

>

ahead of them
he saw an island

it wasn't much

definitely not a paradise
a mass of rocks and a pebbly beach

they tied up the boat

Os followed her through trees
towards a path
they did not speak

a building appeared
square
made out of cinder blocks

“ what is this
what are we doing?”

Jenny laughed
broke into a run
and disappeared

“ Hey WAIT!”

he moved forward
his head ached

and he struggled not to fall

inside the place looked like a temple
or actually

a movie set
trying to look like a temple

big pillars made out of foam
giant urns
and tiki torches

way in the back
a statue loomed

a giant creature

half human
half animal
with multiple heads

maybe he was tripping

this whole situation was bad judgement
thrown forward

amor fati

he saw a table set with candles and wine

sat down
and took a swig

looking at this strange movie set

that's when Jenny appeared again
there was another person with her
an old lady

both of em dressed in heavy robes

then Jenny pushed the old lady in front of the statue

“ say what you need to say “

the old woman stood gaping
her face was blank and scared at the same time

Jenny rolled her eyes
and shook her head

“ she doesn't remember

can you believe it?

how sad is that?

how can you be guilty
if you don't remember?”

then she pointed at the statue
trying to get the old lady's attention

“ see look at it
the statue of Hecate
remember
the goddess of borders-

C'mon Mom
let's dance
like we used to
and pay homage “

she set up a speaker
and orchestra music blasted

Jenny threw off her robe
revealing a tight silver dress

she shut her eyes
and swayed back and forth

then threw up her arms

her eyes flashed open
staring ahead like she was in a trance

Jenny leaped around the statue
doing all kinds of turns
and kicks

the old lady was in her own world

“c’mon Mom dance!” she yelled

Jenny shimmied and swayed next to the old lady

she cried out,

“make a name for yourself
an impression
or you disappear”

then Jenny stopped
and bowed
the music was over

Os looked up distracted and clapped

Jenny lit up a cigarette
took a big drag

and stuck the cigarette in the old lady’s mouth

she looked at Os

“ Alright Scarecrow
is there something you want to say?”

he looked at his hands

when something’s important
you play it over and over in your mind

then it actually happens
and you don’t know what to do

he shook himself
grabbed a knife off the table

and lunged towards the old lady

swung the knife in her face
fingers trembling

one question in his throat
that strangled

“ was it worth it?!!” he yelled

“that’s what i want to know
was it worth it to you ?”

the old lady just stared back at him

>

when you play a game
you’re supposed to be all in

too many questions
spoils the fun

that’s for talkshow hosts later

is that what tragedy is about-
playing the hand your dealt no matter what?

>

back in the boat

Jenny lit up a smoke and asked him

“ so did you get your closure?”

“ why do you need to say that
being cruel- is that the point?”

Jenny laughed

“you think this is funny?”

“ of course it’s funny-”

she sang melo-dramatically

“when the dogs of memory snap your hand
what’s your next move
how will you live? “

“ why did you call her that?”

“what ?”

“mom”

“it’s just a figure of speech”

“ who are you Jenny
for real? “

“ you don’t need to know that scarecrow “

“ i just wanted to land somewhere
and figure stuff out “

Jennys smiled at him

“ you saw the goddess
and we paid homage
now we are crossing borders
homeless and free
out here on the water”

“ not what i signed up for!”
and Os threw himself overboard

the water hit his lungs
and his whole whole body froze

thrashing around in the cold grip
he was choking on salt water

he started to sink
but Jenny grabbed him
and pulled him back up

“oh no you don’t scarecrow”

she lifted him back in the boat
and wrapped him in a towel

he sat there shuddering
the crooked smile of dawn
opened up before them

“ Jenny im not like you - im weak”

“ everybody’s weak
but commitment is an act”

“so where to now?”

“wherever we wanna go”

she smiled and swung the wheel

in the end

a space opened up
and the unholy sun
fell into the sea
for a moment
the sky was on fire

Medea was at the wheel of the boat

he watched her

she was different now
her hair and makeup was perfect
there was no hesitation
her face was smooth

Medea smiled and said

“there will be a time in the future
when stories will tell themselves

no one will need to make a move
and if anyone moves towards you
it will be a shock.”

Jenny seemed paralyzed
he never saw her like that before

Medea held up a statue in her crafty hands

“ this is Queen Hecate
the goddess of borders
with her you can go wherever you want “

she waved the figure in front of Jenny
who nodded hypnotized

Medea tossed the statue overboard
and laughed,

“ don’t you Kids understand?
the gods could care less-
living it up in their high-rise apartments
they are more fucked up than we are

i heard this life-coach recommends
Amor Fati
to *LOVE YOUR FATE*

what a joke-
am i to love greed betrayal and stupidity?

it’s their world but i know what i love
anyway i clean up nice right ?

and to all these
desperate to rewind back to the beginning
i say knock it off

there’s only one way now
fix your makeup
and slash forward

but don’t worry Kids
Medea’s Got You

I know you love to see the sights
so I’m takin you somewhere very special!”

and she hit the throttle
the boat jumped forward into the dark