

JENNIFER METSKER
from Solid City

This is a performance piece performed
inside a cloud due to the electrons
in the chemicals that seed this cloud.

I must wake up to the chemical that I am.

Possible tropes: rough cement
and salt and acid sleepless nights
with men in lab coats
cluttered kitchen scattered tablets
that make me foggy as a coastline.

I'm a deer-shaped cloud.

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Chemistry is not a story but a city
made of brittle earth
and powder kegs and manifestos
a city sunk in nine depressions
waging for a flood.

Take a picture of the spots on my liver
an ancient ruin inhabited by
time's arrow echo hectare after hectare.

Maybe all of this is ritual
like the chicken picture on a microwave oven.

They say you have to stand inside to truly see it
but I've never been invited.

JENNIFER METSKER



Salt scatters in a chemical burn
as I navigate cities on a pink horse.

Thunder clouds clap as I gallop
with my head down.

It doesn't matter
what the blueprint says;

shaving inches off
the surface of a burial mound

won't bring back the era
when the government

didn't gather intelligence
through our firewalls and tombs.



Park anywhere; lots are non-existent here
and carnivals. There's no need for
carousel horses to take you up and down.

I line my pockets with pills like shadows, my body
growing stiff in the saddle.

I'm getting ready for the day when
here we go again
with a dangerous punctuation.

It's a pattern the way a placemat is a pattern
or a river is a pattern until the storm arrives.



Will you shatter the glass case
filled with fossilized bugs

to make a colored ink
(not pink)

and draw me a map
of a city where I'm sanctioned

to forget my name again,
and it's okay, little doggy,

faded rose is just the color
of the dying sun?



The moon and the earth are the largest objects

man has ever held but what about the space

between the particles in my pills

and the space that I make with my mouth

agape? My throat is scratchy

from the words that tried to escape as I waited

for a fortress to take shape.

Isn't that how you build a city out of rocks?

A mad man wanted something what?



It's the first day of summer. I'm waiting for a formal invitation to arrive on my tree-lined street. Children skip across the crosswalk with their rubber balls and dolls and wagons. In a recent mailer for a meat sale, all the meat pink, bloody molecules propped up, photographed, and slipped into my mailbox. There's no harm in imagining forbidden structures. The mailman has pink knees. He's wearing shorts. Beneath his skin his thighs are similar to the meat in the mailer. But I just want to hold space, caress space, not unlock it. Lawn mowers carve up the plate tectonics with a constant sonic tear while a black bear charges at a man on The Weather Channel. The man spreads his arms and yells Yaaa! or maybe Baaa! or maybe Bear? Hard to tell. I put my hair in a Baggie so I can show the doctor terrible things are happening to my body. It's all part of the performance: I cup my hands; I open wide. See the warning label on the side of the bottle? Don't take this if you are pregnant or even plan on letting children run rampant through your garden where bright pink peonies burst like wombs. The chemical shape of such equations is heavier than a hope cloud; it fills my lungs construction cloud unfurling gradually until my own face comes as a surprise. When a mountain gets in the way we have sophisticated methods of moving it. See how the goldfish doesn't get too big for its bowl? There is no bowl here. Perhaps we should invite all the neighbors over? Perhaps we should barbeque tonight?