

[1]

he had three hands I had none

where were my hands where were they

under the cotton sheet

his three loud hands shouted precise non-negotiable commands

his knife-blade hand. his hot blinding-flashlight hand. his granite-weight
hand crushing my lips against gums and teeth

his hands stuttered filth in the eloquent language of power

look at hands

in uniform salute. waving from chandeliered balconies over town plazas.
tossing benedictions. pushing round red buttons behind closed oak doors.
pulling round red triggers. throwing darts at paper wall maps

manicured fingers snapping. snap snap snap

[4]

he knows who I am he sees parts of me I don't see the back of my back the top of my head in his surveillant camera eye whom he shoots me. from a corner lamppost video. as a shadow pickpocket working the crowd

he takes snapshots of my chickenscratch words on paper scraps. letters and bills he microfiches before the postman plops my address in the box after my name unseals in my hand

he knows he sees me he knows me he sees me and collects and files his data. my every gesture procured in stealth. with whom does he confide divide interpret his shares of conquest

cloaked he trails my patter *he he he* trails me until the morsels and paces I talk and walk are sounded and shaped for his gleaning

he gleans gathers and from the remains of *the remains of* he shapes a whole he assumes is the whole

I know what I don't see. he is here and here and I have become the child who swallows her precious gum before the teacher enters the classroom. the cousin who doesn't startle when her premature bra is snapped. the woman who concedes her thoughts to no one and buries cognition in impenetrable depths

he he he gleaned me. what's left are leafless stalks too thin to catch a wind

[7]

materials for this story freeze in winter alleys

drown like telegraph lines under a pastel coral reef

float in the wind that winds your hair

dangle in Central Hardware on old pegboard hooks

squeeze tight against you in subway turnstiles

cram the last inch of elevator stinking sweat and out of breath

arrive cracked or water stained

stutter indecipherable words in the simplest language

materials are in the single-eye babies born in Fallujah
in their depleted uranium blood

materials are in the motherless sisterless fatherless brotherless aunt- uncle-
neighborless son- daughterless grandparentless ghosts of evaporated towns

the rat-a-tat-tat clicking locks on windows and doors

the walls of prison. the walls of open-air prison

the nasal snoring sleep that is never and can never be a let-go relaxed and
confident sleep

materials are shovels to find and claim the names buried under angled
light buried between blades of heat. materials are the pick-axes shivering
overuse

materials are every woman and everywoman

a fist is raised. a roar is born a rumble in the distance

material is the eclipsed sun behind a sudden drone

look at aggression's lustful desire

find materials for this story in power fed with stolen land uprooted trees
suffocated springs

materials for this story haunt the margins. pores of skin. molecules of
metal. crack of stone

[8]

go to her wherever she is. on the rocky ridgeline with the view in all directions. on the tarpaper roof feeding pigeons cooped in their cage. find her above the sun spread like desolate roses on the snow. find her where the sun shirks behind stone and brick before pigeons set out on their missions after they have flown home

go to her though she doesn't call ask beg or hint. go to her she doesn't know she is waiting

bring her a siren bring her a bell bullhorn megaphone microphone but know she will choose to whisper. read the verbs on her lips the spittleless nouns

it's your hankering to talk don't twist her arm. with a running start jump over time's chasm and land on her side intact, pockets stuffed with the fractured present. remedial for you not for her

go to the place she calls home. find her hair permed or dyed. waist wider or trimmer. wrinkles gnawing at her cheeks. she'll answer to the very same name in a recognizable let-go laugh—ha! yes it's me you found, now leave

you don't leave

she'll need bandages or a tourniquet to tamp down the reopened wound. your dimestore first-aid kit too meager