

THE THRESHOLD OF ERASURE  
**JAKE LEVINE**

*The Threshold of Erasure* by Jake Levine

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# THE THRESHOLD OF ERASURE



# 1

a snow begins the fall / monitors turn static

the town sips peppermint tea for the first time  
across white lawns / shells that grow tight  
around our flannel armor / suddenly unfamiliar

from the 40 year dream / a lukewarm bath  
in this ebb / autumn bodies pile  
dropping like a bar jukebox at random

you / trapped on your porch with the mutt  
who caught you / child / running away / my feet stuck  
in the slow boots I was born into / scared  
I extend my arm to comfort where the dog should be

## 2

out back the monster on mescaline swallows a car / it's not hard  
to be a monster / to yes instead of no/ throw back carcasses  
stuffed with angels / the princess sad as sequins fallen from a dress /  
the ibuprofen to ingest / this many to undress / morning hung-over

left inky in a whiskey sidecar / she slides outside /  
the dartboard grows lonely / she sips her deathly flask  
but she is still my friend / the holiest half of what's left  
on a flame in the wind / and later and sober  
I am the monster that ate all my friends

### 3

I am not John A Johnny B or John D / he draws swastikas  
in his guacamole with salt / six virgin maries  
for st guadalupe st augustine and the blessed / bail us  
from apathy / bail us from indifference / bailing us  
always is my flame tooth grin /bigger  
than deaf thunder that haunts a woman's hand

lightening / that man behind the menu who knew beauty  
who carves heart's cavity with a toothpick / hollow  
you can hear his echo / sweetest song /  
the bloody mary not the virgin one







## 4

tied by string by tug boat  
captain John pulls and wets his horn / blow me  
Nietzsche / the sea teaches / minds that drop hot  
grow dreadlocks / I love it / you throw hands  
in the air in the funeral parlor / Rasta Papa  
slumbers under his girl's leather sole

and twists his metal sheet / in midnight's mindlight  
she bleeds / she sleeps / at dawn  
he burns one / he gets oratory / he alone  
flickers / inside the black speaker wires splinter

# 5

rest his grave/ Eazy-E  
the unmelody / for no tune or spoon by knee  
in more than 40 years of dream / my hairless head in my glass  
in my martini / everyday's my birthday / and on the siren's cliff  
the sexy lick their friends instead of me

meanwhile I gather bones for notes  
to hurl against the sea's speech / see / the seagull  
that's me / in the gold suit / that dastardly parrot  
fires off a salty note / *fuck* graffiti on the side of the boat  
the baritone / confused / the paper crown / brave  
and neither talks shame in the lounge / they ice  
they flail / I wash them down / bitches

## 6

as sweet as one of the lollipop ballerinas in neon buggery  
flailing until the night light turns dawn / fatly salivating  
I venom eyed and woozed / wouldn't have poked the bone  
had the bars not closed at 2 / just enough to resuscitate our first copulation

marriage is epilogue / the sea is preface / she decides  
to eat a mountain / swing fire / chase clouds  
upside down / her fist bumps the mirror / sees its face in the crowd / frowns

# 7

dear mob / sorry he was rowdy on the floor  
with his hull injured by the monster he had to drink / he had to murder  
historically speaking he had to eat 6 cheeseburgers / has to commit  
to mistake/ with repeated resolve  
place a laser jam in your dish saucer / a girl  
to get over a girlfriend / an ex to get over the girl /  
he sleeps in his body / and whether with women or words  
he's in love with a cinematic quality











I US A IS M  
T H E  
MONSTER

## 8

sick of stuffy letters / sick of books / sick of something  
comes from something / a roll-top desk / an ashcan / a melon  
she rises from the shampoo bottle and poof  
she wants to try new princess pants / she is sick of her gown  
with the slow-jams in poolhalls she rolls into town

he chalks up the felt tip / cues ivory / hits the pocket  
with his stick / the room thickens / splits  
his memory of grandma's petri dish

all of a sudden / a land of zafu and zabuton  
where the world is blossom / and the cherry tree denudes  
his mistress's bosoms / the flowers / her hair /  
he learns tai chi and sips chai tea

## 9

when Walt shines his shotgun / ghost-Walt disappears  
rustles lost in reeds along the sea / his shagbeard grey / openly  
serious / I is serious business / I has come to bear weight

a naked clam is all pearls in his hairy hands / and that is the finery  
of blather occupied with a sea hag / too young to be a sea siren  
so he finds himself another one / a finely aged tongue  
and they wear each other's asses on their faces for a season

watching movies / eating green / being vegan /  
licking the pinprick gash in his lover's boat  
the monster who taught him to eat her / wear her  
skin for a coat

he learns his lover by licking her toilet hole

## 10

I put her in a mink coat in a bed of cauliflower / a final wish  
for the flowers to feel better/ melted velveta for disease /  
sweet n sour for the dark spaces / unleash the dog  
and let it romp on / the holes maintain their stain

our crusade flopped / all the good men lost  
and John is in fear / with faith / not profligate  
nor halfway dead sitting at the desk  
trying to invent the future / the violins ballet / their wood splits  
until someone croaks in the orchestra pit / the future  
is birdless / trees grow alone / “the future is acausal / growing  
spontaneous with moral sensitivity” / but never could he future  
he is not an inventor / and all his friends are in media res

# 11

a sonoran hotdog vendor / his broken heart /  
the one eyed magician / her empty hat /  
a pregnant male stripper / the lustrous wonder  
in dusk light means we're living / the stray cat atop a tree  
claws new dove chicks / my bed grows empty  
on purpose / the fragile angels solicit  
the seasonal homeless / get frisk with their black dogs  
in this room / by the window / my dust along my stuff gets wiped off  
ordering nothing not be clean / I am building a new beginning





## 12

between brambleberry and pink lady is she  
miss sweet thing / picking a cantankerous fruit  
inside a tunnel across the road / an earthquake / hatred  
runs the tunnel like a flash flood / the clouds mock me

children's faces stare down hopscotch players  
they eat rain / this is no time for roses / I leave a dozen  
at her door / wrapped in a boa constrictor

my beautiful enemy / clouds / they scramble my symbol  
purposely cut my chords / the signal is shaft  
growing a bridge on my back / I wear the tunnel / a gunny sack

no more / wilted petals and snakeskin stretch on her porch



# 13

natural as fruit morphs to pit / my paint roller  
coats the virgin walls black / wrists disassemble  
from arms / hands climb inside the womb  
fondle organs and spread the mouth inside out

a face is gum and teeth to spit her name between  
no difference / pit or seed / no memory / what was pulp  
what is skin / no earth left for us to plant it in

# 14

you know the knoll where daisies grow  
and the rabbit I drowned in bleach / you wonder  
how you fit in / if this is the state  
of parking garages / premium condominiums

it doesn't matter / the souls of the dead will swallow  
the local interstate and bunny bones / shattered hubcaps /  
oblivion with daisy petals / explosions from our hair

this epoch frazzles / without our hair / dance until dead  
we do the drug because of our parents / no different than our parents  
who did it for their parents / we are indifferent

we want history to give us a name / our talk / shackled  
we lie / eat / don't want to die / on the sharp edge of words  
we manage / survive

15

he sits down to write the letter / but he is not ready  
what with his heart too heavy to hold in his hands  
he turns his sight from human ignorance to his pipe  
turns his vigilance into a bag of shag  
light enough for him to hold in his hands  
he grabs a hand and smokes his mrs.  
he hands the shag to his vigilance / you want in on this?

no / she was wrong / everyone is gone  
but he misses his mrs. / he misses his mistresses  
and religiously bred / must he now live

## 16

the arrogance of a broken empire / bottle shells that fizzed darkness

now they're boxed up and now I am burning / now  
I am burning the receipt / this improv death night  
where everyone knows my name / on the wood bar  
I touch everyone's hands with my hands / kiss the flask until it's dead  
kiss the void that is the body / kiss the body that is the receptacle

a hollow bough of a tree / a whale skeleton  
a shell of a sunken ship / a sailor's flesh  
as fish as sand is dirt on land / as forgetting precludes evening

so that dirt is everyone / so that it is a pleasure to meet me  
a pleasure to run fresh dirt through fingers / running in the field  
where we came from

in the field where nothing repeats there is rhyme  
and with rhyme / retribution

in this quiet place I am learning to speak / Jonah  
months deep in the belly of the whale / wondering  
if G-d has forgotten me / this is the threshold of erasure

I am ready / I am ready to give / I am kneeling  
at her body/ stuffed with dead trees / inscribed in the coral reef  
she blossoms up from the bleach

and never can I forget the sound that I gave faith / faith  
making love on its own wet grave /and the living grass / smashed



