

Imagine it is winter once again and your hands are naked.
Truly naked, not simply bare, but naked. Skin. Muscle.
Blood.

And memory.

Rain has been falling for weeks, for months, for years.
Rain has been falling for so many days that you no longer
remember your skin ever being dry. Imagine you are on your
knees, digging into mud with your naked, naked hands.

As you dig deep into this mud, you sing the only lullaby
you remember from your childhood, from the songs of your
mother, from the tunnels beneath your village.

Imagine a child's body lies beside you.

Motionless.

Silent.

This tiny child stares into the sky. Cold. Waiting. This
daughter of your flesh, of your blood.

Imagine her waiting for you to claw your way down into the
earth, to dig this hole into the mud, but you cannot dig the
hole deep enough. You are too hungry. Your fingers are too
broken. You are too weak.

You were the one who survived. You found a narrow boat and a river, and a way to escape into the dark night. You know that God did this to you, that God forced you to be the one to survive.

To this day you are cursed with this woman's knowledge of graves.

Imagine this woman, who survived the burying of her first-born daughter, gave birth to another daughter while sleeping in a camp surrounded by barbed wire and a promise, and she carried this second daughter to some other land.

You know you will never escape remembering this.

Imagine every day for the rest of your life at least one person looks into your eyes and asks: "Is there something wrong?" And all you can remember is this child waking you in the middle of the night. And this shallow grave you dug into the earth.

Imagine the words you speak are heavier than your body.

Imagine, even with the burden of such knowledge, you are forced to go on living.

Your body has been emptied of everything you once trusted in and believed in as your mother's daughter.

And, imagine, all that remains is writing sentence after sentence to the disappeared.

But first it was necessary to leave.



(So as) never to arrive.

A morning prayer translated Mai's tears into the never of always.

Her words turned into water.

A river.

We shared this forgery of forgetting, stumbled upon a ruined mirror abandoned along the South Fork of the American River. Our story so secret that the mirror could not reflect our skin near to each other, each to each. A wilderness of memories disappearing into mirrors.

(The anatomy of our longing vanished. In rain. In mornings. In snow.)

A memory, one that we thought could never be erased, disappeared. In her sleep. She cried of ghosts in a foreign tongue. Before a photograph could be taken. Her words escaped.

“After such knowledge, what forgiveness?”

The truth of the photograph is *not there*. The truth is not the visible we think we see, but the invisible: the longing that has been repressed and will not be written, cannot be written. Mai invited me to lift the veil. The invisible was there. The ruins disappeared beneath this photograph on the inside looking the other way (the tain of the mirror). Traces of a love that has been worn out. (The body beneath this photograph was removed on August 6, 2011. What role does photography play in this remembrance of time past? A fugitive memory, an eclipse of desire. She became an orphan to the moment.)



“Truth is the thing you must not say.” She told me this. Known and unknown mourning for a volatile and impossible tongue. Between absence and presence. “And is that love?”

“What does it matter? Love, a word.”