

Organs in Amber

'But don't you think we'd better press on?' – The liver to the beating heart.

'I don't know. I've never witnessed such a chasm of light before. It looks like butter melting into lead.'

– The beating heart slowing, its thick thump dripped and replaced with a harvest of heady atoms.

'It's just a split in the skin! We'll be able to fuse it pronto!' – Fresh blood cells coursing to climax their coagulation over the frill-mouth.

A surge of adrenalin from the glands, then the bones secrete the panic hormone. A hot flash ripples, followed by a ringing in the ear canal. It reaches a pitch so tinny and high that it sounds like a mouthing of c-r-i-s-i-s. The veins begin to thrash, confused.

'They think that wink of blue sky is a clot! They only know *themselves* as the colour of forget-me-not. They think death is imminent!' – The kidneys, clanging together, perpetually smug at their own miracles of detoxification.

'Ummm? Haven't they ever read a book?' – The thyroid, yawning into the boom network of the mesentery.

'We haven't forgotten. This isn't new to us.' – The oldest blood cells in the body answer, astringently. They sign to the mouth to replace 'the pandemic' with 'this pandemic' but the cheeks ignore the bargain, keep flaccid.

'What do you think happened out there? To cause such radiant light to spill into us?' – The tendons, ever wistful.

'It's quite nice to be able to see outside for a change. Look, there go hands and coffee cups, IDs and flowers, needles... WOW is that what the sphincter looks like from the outside?' – The pancreas, waving.

'Wait WHAT?! Let us see!' – The small and large intestines rush the frill, gaping.

'Oh sorry, it moved! Too bad... That was really something!' – The kidneys, brushing off the words, not knowing themselves whether they saw something lush or horrendous.

'I actually quite like our perma-dark in here, and the things we see. I know it's mostly food and fingers, but maybe one day it will be a baby or a blade.' – The spleen, sadly set to neutral, has been muscling up to speak since the jet-black of the body was split into amber.

'I've heard some mouths call skin claustrophobic. But some bodies even put a second one on, made of shining latex, so that they can feel safe, clung, compressed.' – The stomach, shuddering at the memory of too-tight contraction, leading to a quick vomit.

Outside, a competent voice screams, 'ONLY 10 DECS PER MILLIGRAM!'

'Whaaaaaaa?' – The organs in amber chorus. The natural world doesn't count itself in numbers, it counts in depth, density of colour, in intensity of feeling. Numbers and stats form a lump in the throat.

'What is going on up there? It seems like the frill is getting wider! The shard just keeps on burrowing!' – The appendix, always on the look-out for the light, since it heard that its days were numbered from the liver that was transplanted last year.

The worm-shaped organ continues, muttering amongst its vital work, longing for the hands, one of its collaborators – 'And why do I need to prove the validity of my existence? I've been here since the beginning, and I offer you so many rebooted visions, feelings-reveries-insights-prospects-hope-intuition! If my own system doesn't value me, then how will anyone else? And how would I live not pressed in with all of you?'

'I don't know what to tell you babes!' – The blood cells up top, screaming inanely.

'If there is sun, you should put your face in it.' – The tendons recite quietly.

Viscous particles waft up and out of the still-growing frilly smile. 'How will we build relationships without the smells of the body?' – The soul, weeping.

'Oh wait, maybe it's stopped!' – The kidneys chime.

'OK, BACK TO WORK THEN LADS' – The new liver corrals, eager to affirm its status as top organ, deflecting from the fact that it was the last one in.

'But... Shouldn't we wait and see?' – The lungs propose blindly, every in-and-out breath pushing against the amber tissue.

'NO. No time.' Having been kept on time its entire life, especially in the twenty-four hours after a sesh or a week of antibiotics, the liver isn't keen to get off the clock now.

'Hold on bladder, you're pissing out the teachings!' – The small intestines, looking on as the bladder goes kamikaze.

'I know, I know, I've got to change.' – The liver groaning rotten. 'But I'll hang on as long as I can.' (Imagine an organ with a toadish, smoker's drawl, that, THAT, is the liver).

'LOOK!' – The pancreas.

Through the final pucker of the frill the organs watch the hands scratching marks on the knuckles. *DENIAL* is written on one hand, *PREDICTION* on the other. And they can just make out *remember your position* scrawled in sweaty ink on the palm.

'Here are the jaws of balance for humanity. These two words are what they've got to fold upon themselves. They are the sides of the coin that they'll need to look at, this century.

'Denial is a human symptom of being so freaked out by the luck of your birth that you can't look it in the eye. It's a tool to keep you alive. But, if you use it, it has consequences for the shaping of reality.

'And as for predictions, the hands know them best, because they're the ones that make the things we look at, and the ones that pressed the buttons on beauty and destruction in the last century.' – The neurons whisper out the mouth.

Darkness returns fast, the weather of their crisis sealed by stitches bound to dissolve and leave a bad taste in the pores of each organ. Plush flesh holding them once again inside the feedback loop of their wet suit.

'When will we re-liquefy and run? I thought that was coming.' – The timid spleen split-lips, before motion-sickness draws a tide. 'Wait, are we moving? I feel like we're moving.'

Jumping off the neurons, the hands begin their appeal, talking back to the body –

'We can tell you something of this crisis. We can touch you, and offer you an alternative commentary. We can suck it all up and spit out something like a high-definition jelly, something more like feelings. We can offer you images of such strength in your waking hours that they give you new images to chew on in the absence of fresh stimulation. But under the terms of this system, we need arms to move and eat and make and hold us up as we do our work. Will you be them?'

'Oh *WHAT!* They're taking us back into the system again!' – The organs chorus, distracted.

The hands protest, slicing themselves off at the elbow and drinking the marrow with the rhythm of those on day-release from the fat. They might as well, the organs didn't ask them what they needed, so they made their own luck. The hands scuttle off towards the horizon, licking their fingers.

'No more sweeping statements!' – The stomach lining urges.

'But wait isn't that a...?' – The lungs.

'No more bogus catchphrases as life rafts! Dig in to the words you're spouting! It's your duty! Stop saying things you've heard before! It's all panto when you swing wide. When you say that word, what do you *mean* by that word.' – The stomach lining to the tongue.

The hands sign to the sun: SEE YOU IN THE PARK FOR THE UNANNOUNCED. OF COURSE THE HAND THAT MAKES BEAUTY ALSO NEEDS TO EAT.

'Who?' – The bladder.

The hands speed back for revenge like poison darts, spiders incoming from all directions.

'You can't predict a crisis!' – A competent voice howls from the outside. As the words vibrate through them, the organs grab onto each other to steady themselves.

'Look around you, look with bare eyes, look with fresh words. It's constant and there, *of course* you can. Take the amber and strengthen the flexibility of your soul.' – The eye that has been plucked out the

head, now held in the hand, speaks. 'We must still keep an eye on what we want the world to look at.'

It launches itself and kisses the other bodies, slashed and stubbed, burnt and washed back, from all over the globe, that came for the spectacle, the conversation, the belief, for the world is known from space for its simultaneity. 'IS THAT ENOUGH MOMENTUM FOR YA?'

'HOW MANY REVOLUTIONS AND ENDINGS EVEN WAS THAT?' – Every cell, whiplashed.

Another body, on the other side of the water, has watched the slice, the frill burrowing, and the light. It makes notes for later but its phone dies. It's one of those sensations that repeats on you.

Fer Boyd

Fer Boyd is a writer and artist who often creates narratives using concept-engineering, image-writing and cartoonic physics to produce an alterity of the contemporary body. Projects include *Skinned / Detouched* (Eastside Projects & Motto Books, 2018), a pair of books by Alice Channer to which Boyd contributed an erotic fiction about liquid PVC and a horror story in zero gravity, that were awarded the Foundation Prince Pierre of Monaco Prix International for Creative Critical Thinking. Boyd's 'A Theory for the Strange-Girl: Raw Red Text', is a cult corporeal manifesto distributed by COUNTRY MUSIC at club nights, that has been manifested in sound by Yantan Ministry and at various venues including underwater at Vårberg public pool, Stockholm, by P0\$\$€. Their poetry and essays have also been published by Extra Extra, Canal, After Us and Afterall, among others. Exhibitions, performances and airings include ICA, The Horse Hospital, The Sunday Painter, Live Art Development Agency, 'ULTIMATE FANTASIES' at Guest Projects, London; 'DEATH DRIVE' at Outer Space, Australia; ilyd and Montez Press Radio. They have taught, given talks and workshops at Royal College of Art, University of Leeds, and Yorkshire Sculpture International, Aalto University, Helsinki and Open Doors LGBTQAP+ Youth Service, Australia. Since 2017 Boyd has been co-organiser of SHELL LIKE with Amy Lay-Pettifer, creating deep listening events and text commissions in sound. Most recently together they exhibited a new audio work at Liverpool Biennial 2021.