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Numbers are People and Colors are Words

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Numbers are People are Colors are Words

I

iodine.
halogen.
non-metallic.
atomic number 53.
solid at room temperature.
derived from iodes, the greek term for violet.

...

today
today
I
sat in the parking lot of a grocery store
the nose of my truck pointing toward the street
and filled out applications
that asked me to give references
of people who know me
but as my eyes
caught the yellow
of the little flags
on a caravan of vehicles
I
recognized
I
recognized
that Emerson was right
in his Experience
that no one knows me
that no one knows anyone
the flags were yellow
and
I
contemplated aloud
what the dead person's middle name was
and what song the man in the
violet
the color of healing bruises
camry was listening to
was singing along to
as he was driving to the cemetery
because his mouth was open so wide
wider than an oceanic epiphany
about the way
a cactus in winter snaps and bleeds
today
today
I
pencil in hair
head numb from lack of sleep
voice hollow while singing
about nothing really
about lips cracking like cathedrals and
iodine staining my fingers
I
entered the grocery store and
grabbed an old newspaper
a newspaper from not today
and read the news
of rapists and bankruptcy
and flipped to page E6
where another form of tragedy was documented
a woman died
her funeral and her burial site
correspond to the direction
of the caravan of vehicles with little yellow flags
and her name
her name
her name was
Violet
and
I
get sad thinking about her empty clothes
pressed to perfection
probably pink
and how one day you, too, will die
and
I
in lieu of counting sheep
will have to count the freckles
on someone else's back
at night when
I
am trying to sleep
today
today
I
remembered the poem you wrote about me
how i stain like coffee beans
stain the hands of those who pluck them
how i scar like tobacco
scar the fingers of those who suck it
caffeine nicotine iodine staining
you brought out the best in me
like iodine illuminates invisible starch
I
while standing in line at the grocery store
to turn in my application
void of references
calculated in my head
how old she was
and was sad
was deeply moved and disturbed but mostly sad
that she was merely
53
and suddenly
I
remembered the way my father said
I
was too young to leave home
and
I
thought that she
she was
she was too young
and standing in line to turn in my application
I
stole a pack of gum
and told Emerson
that we are alone because in the end
we are merely the numbers
of an empty equation
too complex to solve