CYNTHIA CRUZ
NEBENWELT

Quarantined inside a wonderland of endless
Dream: waiting on horse back, at the gate
Of a Dostoyevsky mock death, milky reverie
Of the guillotine. And a room of green and
White coconut cream layered cakes, an infinite
Winter inside them. A childhood of illness.
The moon was the only nurse I knew.
At the shore, I rode a little rowboat
Out to the end of the world. I found the kill
And entered it. The owl and the pussycat
Rowed in a yellow boat into the gleaming.
Crept out of the playroom
Into the aquarium: Vienna, Salzburg, mildly
German. Mother's cabinets and jewelry boxes.
My small white hands dripping in amethyst,
Pearls, and aquamarine. Woke on the floor
Slept there, wept there, inside its envelope
Of drowning.
THE BIRTHDAY CEREMONY

Seventeen rooms of long maroon
Tables, of endless

Raspberry cream cake,
Cheap California

Champagne, and stacks of magazines and childhood Photographs

On the pale pink plush.
White as milk, and cold

As the hand of God,
That locked empire

With its slumber of ghosts, its dead Engines.

The uncanny
Always comes back.

What white darkness: pearls,
Porcelain, and medicine.

The mansion of childhood
Is shattering.

A sentinel, I stand at the entrance
To the burning fortress.
HOTEL OBLIVION

At Hotel Oblivion, the snow
Goes on for days. A small saga,
Its secret voices bloom against the rotting.
The rooms are painted mint green
Frosting. The men are handsome.
They wear wool blonde suits, take opium,
Ride white horses in a flood
Of bloodhounds, vanishing into the crushed
Black spider of the forest. It hurts
To look at us. Afraid, we mask our faces
In glam make up to ward off the invisible.
Wear ancient Warhol wigs and Red
Falke or Fogal stockings. We are promiscuous
In our thinness, don't leave the green mansion,
Are trapped inside the snow box, noiselessly
Splendoring. Outside, the bright pines
Weep, electric diamonds, and stars. At midnight
Supper is served on delicate Dresden
Porcelain: lamb and endless French
Macaroons; Vermouth in small Crystal goblets.
When the men return, they let loose
Their horses. Nomadic, they wander
Back defeated to the fortress, broken,
All of this vast collecting, this glamorous
Danger and doom.
MAGICAL

Wallpapered the white walls
Mint green stripes

With miniature yellow tigers
Aiming their woolen, precise

Bodies through the halos
Of hula-hoops.

At the hospital the nurses
Don't know the riddle, how

It's unraveling. If I say
The word baby a hundred times,

Then please,
Can it be real.
KINGDOM OF CLUTTERING SORROW

Another helping of champagne
Cream cake: stacked and beveled,
A miniature cathedral smashed,
Soft white box of sugar and glitter.

Outside, meanwhile, the beige Mercedes
Arrives, its seats of soft red leather.
Its driver, the inventor of sorrow
Takes me across the dead
Zones, and bridges
Of America, its eternal labyrinths,
Interlocked, and without meaning.

A collapsible cage
Flocked golden and framed
In wet black lacquer.
And voluminous: dawn's
Museum of stars.

Masked and gowned, I make
My way down
Sokurov's Grand Staircase
Leaving forever behind
The dark kingdom of clutter.

At night the ambassadors arrive
In a ceremony of silent
White blizzard. Carrying goblets and rabbits,
Dragging bags of chain letters.

It's true,
I come from the
Tricked-up hospital
Of beauty and ruin.

I am frozen forever in this wonder
Room, this zoo of one million
Diamond machines.

Come with me into my blonde room
Of music.

Self Portrait as Marilyn
In the Final Sitting.
OUT OF THE DESERT HOSPITAL

Awoke in cobalt blue
Fogal stockings, and Kiss
Stage make up, inside a bathysphere
Of wounding music. A mansion
Of German, rooms of strudel, and quadruple
Layered raspberry cream cakes.
Starve the shame down to androgyny
And numbness. Beige plastic trays
With my name engraved on them.
A rabbit-eared radio in the cabin is transmitting
The parade of the dead. Dazed, I’ve lived inside
This adored orphanage, this sorrowful
Wunderkammer. Always gleaning or wasting in its
Accumulating. Darboven panels and a handbook for
Cataloguing the stars. Glam and gloom, a diamond
Gold necklace wrapped around my waist.
In drag, embellishing, collecting, then
Deconstructing to stop the brutal onslaught.
SETTING FOR A FAIRY TALE

Cold, grey, Gogol-dawn
All day.

And outside the glimmering
Palace,

Inside the perennial garden,

Among the blazing
Flags, the lights

Of the turrets,
Blinking

Into the strain
Of the twenty-first century—

The parade of names
Race past me,

And my life

Blooms
Into the glass scope:

Small and empty
As everything

God
Left here

In this sad
Dead world.
I am moving
You should know-

Nearer
The beautiful

Clear windows
Of the glimmering hospital.
Am Steinhof, or the Wagner Jauregg Hospital in Linz.

Driven to Trauersee, alone
In a beige Mercedes taxi

Whispering Bachmann, the radio
Broadcasting races from the Autodromo in Monza.

Through the woodlands of hurt
Foxes, green grasses, and red and yellow birds on telephone wire.

To the coast of Genoa, and its pearl-
Black ocean, its murk,

Mysterious like the jewel-white
Magnets of radiating madness.
Over the Orinoco
Through the black fields
Of what once was Eden.

A queen in a glass
Palanquin,
I slept through the burning

And was laid flat on the grass
Like a child
Dragged in from the ocean.

In the morning, three singing women arrived.
They slit open the lung of my belly.
But there were no babies inside,

Just green sea foam and jewel
Encrusted earthworms.
These words, this terrible song.