

dear Marthe,

by Jesse Nissim

A Dusie Kollektiv Chapbook, created for Dusie Kollektiv 9: “Somewhere in the Cloud
and Inbetween” — A Tribute to Marthe Reed

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dear Marthe, 5/4/18

It's Spring

I'm wearing a bright

royal blue T-shirt

a v-neck it's seventy-

seven and humid after

so long looking at dirty

piles of snow, another

dear friend just said

through a screen that I

look beautiful that

heathered royal soft

like you loved to wear

at your neck it's glow on

loan against my lack

it slows my breath

to not know how

to feel a closing space

I choke on it

dear Marthe, 6/1/18

I am working again
at least as of this moment
told Mike how ungrounded
I feel walking around
still mostly only cry
when I see your flowers
unfolding the fleeting
nature of thoughts
sensations even
I am learning more
each day you're gone
about you going over
past encounters
the tone of your voice
through my head
your staccato fractures
of movement around my kitchen
five shades of blue escalating
I propriocept a new volume of light
irritable among the echoes
your rhythms syncopate.

dear Marthe, 6/3/18

We are thick and listening, you once said.
Is there no line between me and everything else?
There are some spring heartbeats.
Sometimes I write in our office.
There you are, and you are not there.
Nestled, cold, an immense amount
to accomplish. And at times conflict
is the "it" at some point in the future
through which I want, I mean write,
to understand. I am bearing a message
Zinnia's finally discovered ice-cream
a flutter like a sphincter. We were going
to take her to the custard place on Burnet.
She walks now. You are not inhabiting
the space meant for you. I am bearing it
across the emptiness. My child comprehends
the meaning of the question, *ready?* Not a symbol
not an existential emptiness. She replicates
the exact inflection but there's a hole in me
feels like mimicry

dear Marthe, 6/4/18

A bulldozer is dumping continuously
large loads right where my esophagus
opens to my stomach. Is this body
even mine? Can I choose to move it all—
gravel, petroleum, stunned wildlife, sand—
back up to my face and out, or not?

I was so sure about all my uncertainties.

I fuss too much as you know and have
revealed so many ignorances this week.

My foot mistook a fledgling for a leaf

I'm fucking up in love and anger

A fuckup taking too much sustenance
from the earth. I promise to have failed
so fully without you present

I am never to recover. No words
to form from here. There is a wall
to keep me and there is a well
which I reject, refuse to fill.

What if I fail to move myself out
of center, move words in there?

dear Marthe, 6/5/18

Grey and drizzling feels right
for making of myself a landscape.
Last night a crazy sunset
skimmed the backyard tree line.
I was doing dishes
don't remember what
I dreamt. I walked with
Mike and the dogs
this morning. Your voice
all over my internals
moves whenever
the trees move.

dear Marthe, 9/28/18

The eight weeks you were away, still
breathing, felt too long to live through

winter, housework, teaching, parenting
without you here. Each time I drive up

Adams Street I crane my neck, stunned again
by the red doors to emergency, their power

over me. How is it almost October?
Four leaves you gathered still here, piled

dry on my desk. What do I call them now?
What words did you last say to me?

dear Marthe, 9/29/18

Every day my drive
home surprises me

every day my privilege
to drive home surprises me

Mike and I went to With Love
for pink hummus

and here in current day America
rape is still all the rage

so wildly prolific
Mike helped me troubleshoot

all the white male triggers
in my classes, I miss your anger

I have needed to see your wide
bright face so many times

It's no surprise I keep choosing
the paths nearest to where you

last were, then find you in my rage

dear Marthe, 10/19/18

Eager to be alone, to be alone
my thoughts, my body

no toddler demands at top volume
no rage after I remove the toy-broom weapon

Why am I not allowed to throw the play kitchen on its side
or hide until I am found beneath the stool?

In a recent dream a dilapidated house
you driving away in a dark blue pickup

it takes both my minds and all my bodies when asked
how to spell simple words while pouring Cheerios

both kids yelling at once and one after another
the tasks and requests

here in our office, the soy milk
the teakettle, the leaves you gathered

last fall when you were living, I keep
looking for new surfaces of you

it is my condition now, your leaves
orange-brown dry and sturdy to the touch.

dear Marthe, 3/9/19

Remember when you
never said to me

for the sake of lightning
let's make a storm

for the sake of softening
the mental pictures

let's drink wine on a porch
that's not flaking lead

let's unsettle the archive
so waves and cows

and particles are free
remember that?

dear Marthe, 3/18/19

Your poems
restore the lush world

where I dry, dormant
where I hollow

you friction
where I winter at core

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