

# Contraindications



Verity Holloway

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## **The House, Again**

I am in the house again.

In a dream I am going with held breath  
Down corridors too thin for shoulders.  
My dog is with me, soft love.  
I wish he'd choose to linger somewhere safer.

In a dream, the house in me opens its doors.  
The rooms have been painted  
The carpets now an ineffable white  
(There's a rug she wouldn't have liked)  
And it's all too clean,  
When you consider what happened here.

This is the house that breathes.  
In the attic, I find her  
And at once the place is airless, tight as lye.  
I am never quite prepared for its methods of preservation.

She is The World.  
And The World, the lady dervish, whirls as hard as grief.  
She's a servant in a cloudy wig, a dress of the blue atlas,  
And she tugs my hair in distress.

## **Stella**

Stella lies under duvets three,  
Ochre and glue and two bulbous knees.  
Imagine a deathbed of thirty years –  
That's Stella.

Virgins from Greece and a papal cross  
Ash of the Ganges  
Scotch.  
I wait.  
Pierrot and Gandhi and notes from a soldier,  
Stella in state.

## **My Boy Lolita**

If the boy were an object as real as the girl  
Imagine him - 1972 - a train station photobooth  
Blue curtain backdrop for the bathroom-perfect pout  
Mouth crumpled carnation, cameo-salmon,  
Him, the fan, the peacoat pocket full of pens  
For talking to friends,  
He's the thin thing I think of when  
I'm the boy who's the girl who's the boy.  
It's a queerness.  
There are four of us on the paper,  
But on the dotted line

## **A Passing Knowledge**

Patient, aged 40, schizophrenic catatonic woman of colour.

Drooped lids, white sheet.

Fig B: she's a smile in a garden.

Case 16 is no longer bothered by her fears and obsessions.

Clip-on pearl earrings.

Serene photograph of mature female "shows strained expression".

Case 74, 1940, she's been agitated five years,

Outcome since lost.

Case 76 now doing work for the government.

He worried because he couldn't find a job

Couldn't find a job because he worried.

Case 128: the relapse.

At work within two months of procedure -

By August 19, 1949, felt he could not go on.

Procedure repeated.

Case 22: brunette, sharp and frank,  
Gained 125 pounds following her procedure.  
This is how we measure success.

Case 29, white male, May 6, 1942.

"God.

I'm getting ready to blow up."

## **Pelvis**

Who planted this chilli seed?

Dig it out.

Bad roots tangle these capillaries,

These little stinging branches

Singing crackles in my pocket. His pocket.

In the sandy molten channel of my scotch bonnet.

Chronic invisible,

I'm not one of you knowing Willendorfs,

Warm of fecund fat made dumb by those accepted rites.

I elected a colder anaesthetic

And he entered cleanly in the sleeping.

Tell me where the pain is.

(What a frame of reference.)

So it's your pelvis, he says.

He says.

He says.

## **Lavender**

Quite awake last night, I felt them toss you at my feet;

Your stiff and lavender weight -

Arms wide, puppetry,

As if to clutch.

At my feet, your empty body is a question.

Daughter, what punishments are these?

Has your grief run cold?