

ANNE KAWALA

FROM SCREWBALL (THE INDISPENSABLE DEFICIT)

TRANSLATED BY KIT SCHLUTER

Sur la neige, it's a huntress-gatheress who, at the wheel of white hummer™, crosses what's left of the sea ice. Looking out for the passes, plants and animals to flee and eat, she is looking to strike twice with one stone, to survive two dangers twice. On the dashboard are mounted a P38, a knife and a switchblade, a GPS that isn't on. Riding shotgun is a buckled-in bassinet, a calm baby blows spit bubbles. Hidden under the roadmap laid out between the driver's seat and the dashboard there is, in the sunlight, a kalashnikov, a first-aid kit, and in the glove compartment, two loaded beretta 92FS's, a BIC™ lighter, an iPad™, a compass, an astrolabe. In the backseat a child watches the landscape whizzing by, he absent-mindedly pets Dzeta, whose snout rests on his lap; on the floor are two storm lanterns, a kevlar composite bow, a wooden daikyu, their quivers full (sharp, plumed, and explosive arrows), pulleys, carabiners, four 8.6mm dynamic ropes, a 10mm rope. She knows how to tie every knot: overhands, double overhands, flat knots, running knots, sliding knots, lark's heads, cat's paws, reef knots, grannies, dogshanks, fireman's chairs, fisherman's knots, sheet bend doubles, overhand loops, marlinspike hitches, collars & capstan knots and carrick bends, double fisherman knots and rolling hitches, in simple figure-eight loops or in double ganses. In a timeworn satchel are a pair of cutting pliers, a leather stitching kit, a split hinge, splicing hooks, fids, a packet containing solid and hollow needles, spools of marline twine. In the trunk are crammed pelts, a tent, a deflated lifeboat, its motor, pump, oars, a seawater distiller, skis, poles, ten jerry cans of gas, piles of dried yak droppings, distress flares, a toolbox, a jack, tubs of spelt grains, rice, chicory, tomato, parsley, corn, cabbage, string beans, peas, broad beans, garlic, crates of germinating potatoes, lemons, cardboard boxes of canned foods, five 50-kilo bags of rice, ten 20-liter containers of potable water, two containers of oil, a gas camping stove, a saucepan, three bowls, a mixer, a solar panel. She bears down. And for now everything is going just fine.

At the wheel of her white hummer™, protected by the passenger compartment, having to think about having to relearn everything. Not shooting the bow or popping off her gun, but behaviors of what she will be ferreting out and the appropriate traps. Paths she will be able to take without risk. Relearning as learning that having learned won't *necessarily* be of use for more than a moment. A season. A landscape. Nature. Unforeseeable. Homages. Witches and wizards. The—merging, which has been left behind, which accompanies her, which is to be met again. Explana, *quest*, ions – un circuit. Which stories for the kid, in the backseat. Which gestures. Which songs. Which babblings to the baby. In keeping with. What form love will take when the reunions take place – that, .

Marches on
the white.
Disquieted by the hissing
 more resounding
 where the motor floods.

CONTINUER.

TOUT DROIT.

PLUS VITE.

PLUS VITE.

PLUS VITE.

PLUS VITE.

PLUS VITE.

SUR LA NEIGE,

The white.

The cracking.

The sea ice
gives way.
Zig-

zags,

fissures,

chasms.

Black,

liquid,

diagonal.

Sheer.

The the huntress-gatheress accelerates toward what seems the most

stable,

expansive

breaking

apart

the

least.

Muted

rattling,

still

the sea ice

gives way.

Everywhere.

Fragments

a-

drift.

Theirs,

wide and great.

Enough to without danger, for a

while at least. Conditionally.
turn.

Wide

Off.

Motor killed. She takes a look at the baby, rear-view mirror, at the kid,
at the dog. Relaxing. If they're not worried, and she
mixes up the animals and the children while taking her shortcut, that means
everything's all right: no danger for the time being. To be adrift
on the sheet of sea ice is neither the most comfortable nor the
most reassuring thing, but, given her height, there are clearly worse situations,
sighs, puts on gloves, sighs, rear-view mirror, wave, steps out.