

**JOHN HIGH**

**FROM VANISHING ACTS**

There are days on the water. Only the banality  
Of beauty will hold you. A rupture of time//  
and the coexistence of memory & forgetting.  
At the cave all of the bows & remittance.  
A seaside of nothingness where days live on  
alongside a lunar plane where a one-eyed boy  
& mute girl are walking to the carnival....So good  
to live here with you. Or you, just that—these berries  
and words on bark & leaves. Cranes & trumpets & an altar.  
And after all: the tumbling of wind,  
weeds, tumbling of choice, of water,  
voices, singing & dancing, when everywhere i go is homeless  
and everywhere we go is home.

(The girl's diary after first meeting the circus players.)

In translating where do you go she asks the bicycle  
man. Rain on dank smell, source of river, a  
cave's entry, the boy smoking with a monk & the dead  
in their breathing. A ladder leaning against a wooden altar  
& a stone gutter's trickle of groundwater rising in  
mist. Igneous silt & all ash fallen from our hands. Willow  
branch in a dream of circus mules we could ride  
outside these letters of time.

(Day 1)

There was a sanctuary on the other side of cliffs they began to walk. A city of some kind at sometime had been there. A book of sand, or a tree of events. A soccer field, playground, the basketball courts the boy remembered, but no longer remembered were of memory. The memory itself a place, a parenthetical pause like the monkey bars he & the girl would swing on, and the ghosts or prayers on match sticks of books & burnt leaves by the library. Where had all the people gone? She would often write imaginary letters to the children somewhere else in the sea now. There were so many things of awe, and hunger, and cities.

(Day 2. The monk writing in our book.)

The night had passed and the morning had come. The girl awoke without memory or dream. Smell of honeysuckle in grass. Her mother sitting & sewing a sweater for a boy. Perhaps she had vanished into rain before suddenly spreading her arms into we who were waiting in the following pages. The mother would come back like this: the stark cold autumn, a weaving of birds within & out as if the entire holiness of death were only ours & in each breath. It is time now, she mouthed to the daughter.

(Day 3.)

It was the gratitude in a boy's eye & the signal of birds & waves & you  
Ashore//the preparation & scene//: a backdrop the girl saw  
opening eastward as a place in the body or maybe this  
moving sky film waves as in you are here & no longer here  
time disappearing & all back i see the hillside & then the day we all were walking  
the dog & talking in the script & it's like this too a clouded grey stage  
set in his one eye & that gratitude no longer separate  
as a being or longing of who you were before

(Day 4. The crow recording everything  
he had seen in the last book.)

Looking into the face

back where you are now as it is

there  
some suggestion of reading  
the future earth

in autumn bare trees

where we once stood &

imagined points of horizon  
cloud & thought

kindness of people & friends & revelers

On a face of a road

the child who drew your face  
& voices passing into time

That precise questioning

brought you here to us

all with this sky

scattered in rain

(Day 5.)

That particular vanishing behind  
things as is  
sheep meadow words bees  
backstory or back pocket  
a girl & ghost lingering by sea  
at the movies backstage  
(though we don't venture into knowing)  
Unsayings//:  
Or if you were possibly alive  
in every minute particle manifesting  
is that the color or shape  
or thing itself//  
things themselves arriving  
in an unspoken sound  
of waves  
or emotion-thought after the movies  
trees & fish & strangers  
meeting here

right out

in palm of your hand

(Day 6. The film crew's directions  
to the cooks on set.)

We were lounging in the abandonment of moon a glass of pickle  
juice at the cafe & a storyline of circus jugglers on the roof & well  
what did you expect what is it in emotion after all the girl's  
diaries zooming into a mind a place or history & time is like that isn't it  
poo bears & lost trains & ticket stubs & where were you by the way  
& who gave you this narrative or sea this boy this girl this banging of musicians  
on pots & pans i know you don't know but here it is how real do you believe it is  
a one-eyed boy speaking in tongues thru a mouthless mouth leaning  
into a memory of a father & mother & brother & war & this  
trombone blowing in the head that owl a perch a birch tree  
a river a flock of crows a game of hopscotch a child playing in the fields  
of illusion & why of course of course & the girl gesturing  
over here over here i think the way we're going is over here, monsieur

(Day 7.)

the other side of we//

weed in water—

...another ghostwoman lounging  
in a parallel boat

fingers of a fisherman & flute at dawn

black reed under sycamore

still of sun edging inward

the other musicians wade in

shallow & shade of branch/sound check

over bark & mud

in silence hearing everything

you've never heard

or needed more than to be

(Day 8. Note to the musicians: the flute player  
remembering his part in the shot.)

The fine breeze earlier when his alphabet arrived.  
An earlier syntax of desire & the father walking a dirt rode.  
The film clip of a man hovering there in a circle of geese.  
You, who you are, you, in whose movie.  
A horse in a field.  
Faint smell of hay & manure.  
You who are in the body, these pages of leaves gesturing above trees.

(Day 9. The boy writing in her diary.)