the letters above the door spell bird haven

pennaceous shuffling, scarlet—
    the cheek crinkles talcum
harsh echoes here
    box walls
    syrinx screech
    six-sided cacophony
the moluccan murmurs

_hello_

_hello?

_hi_

SOLD $2100, sticky-note official
    but conures “big personality” on sale $300
    life discounted in red sharpie
apparently
    high-stepping spread toes
    paces from end
to branch end
cockatiel'd apprehension
    “outgoing”
the air gapes
against clipped primaries

hi

hi sweetie
obsidian eyes
what did you see?
sun-dapples through canopy
before rafters
hosed-down cement floor water splashes
after afternoon rainy warmth

hi

i hear you sweetie, hello
evolutionary chasm
crossed
bony tongues forcing my language
africa’s grey knows more
knows more to know
to stay quiet closed-eyed corner sleeping
shut it out
Curriculum Vitae

I asked,
and she wrote notes to me.

They fluttered down on moth wings, postmarked Saturn,
and flared open to stare at me.

She added the punctuation of peregrine talons,

stings of pressure to the heel of my palm
through burnished leather gloves.

I asked,

and she spun jaguar spots around me,
brushed my fingers to pelage,
sent rumbled purrs down my spine.

I asked,

and she mirrored me in elephant eyes.

She anointed my held-out hands with soft
trunk-tip touches
greeting.
I answered,

*Let me help*

and she placed a little pocket mouse with Pacific-rippled fur

between my thumb and index finger

scruff pulled back,

young eyes wide on their twenty-second day.

I held gently, and thanked her.

---

Refugial

In the hall of rooted kings

the air slides in a different way.

The light is dimmed here;

the photon strands are frail

and they tend to break

when trying to stretch

across years of thousands.

The vein-thinned leaves

in this cavern of thickened air

would not be real if the sun

drifted down beneath the canopy to peer at them.

There is something deeper here,

someone breathing the slow life-movement

of this place…
thaumaturge.
The mushrooms chatter upon their crumbling palace
dithering about Hades and Methuselah.
You can’t hear the trees speak?
Their words
are too slow.
They speak in eons.
And the stones just listen, now.
Even the birds move slowly here,
gazing at the spaces between the trees
before placing thin toes down with care, wings folded,
songs soft or stopped altogether.

I should more often listen to the footsteps of birds.

1. Over time, climate patterns change and ecosystems change along with them. Refugial areas are climatically controlled and experience consistent conditions over millennia, even as the areas around them change. While the ecosystem around them may expand and contract, they persist, and thus are ecologically much older than the areas around them.

Island

On the soft-trodden path home,
a winding avenue of sand between
a gentle wildness of grass and shrub,
I find I have lost the sun.
Dusk scurried away too soon
and my eyes search, resolution suddenly
blurred out.
I begin to feel it in the starlight,
the blurred-edge shapes whose matter
suffuses into silvered air,
turned to insubstantial softness.
Tree limbs trace calligraphy ever-finer
until it seeps into the darkness.
I feel the black air between me and them
thrum with energy, becoming full and tangible.

My skin hazes at the edges,
   edges rubbing out
          edg—

I meld into murky air, dissolving grasses,
feathery sand—
and we blend.
I feel lizard’s heartbeat pulse
through the viscous air
against my own.

Each individual expands, intrigued,
beyond its skin.
      Individuals merging
             indi—

The sun, when in its blinding light,
sharpened distinction, cut
through the air and sterilized it
to a separating void.
My eyes believed it.

I feel it in the starlight, though;
I step without seeing the foot
but find the way
for I am the space I pass through
and the sand molding into my footprints.
The starlight gifts my eyes with truth.

Though I think it must be only I
who requires the aid of stars.
I saw it in the grass, that day.
I saw the grass in the wind
undulating,
flowing together,
leaf against leaf,
and felt the truth of something
thicker, something drifting between
and through them that the wind had stirred up
to share with the world.

I feel now why the grasses ripple,
bowing and rising
as they avow
an ethereal
endowment
of
Tao
Speak
tongues to me.
Not licks of flame, not romances, no slavish syllables
of human mouths.
Let your words writhe
to myrmecophagous probings,
rumble proboscidean from your ribs.
Do not presume Uralic tones
or Tupian, whisper *Tupaia*
through the overlapping leaves.
Voice your shibboleth and waltz
Przewalski.
Hum Trochilidae and flutter
the beat of wings along your teeth.
Glide into colugo,
croon the words as if to drift
them through canopies.
Sound
a
la
la...
‘alalā whispers from the deep
volcanic breaths.
Trill the light notes ‘akikiki
and sing ‘akeke’e to sunrises,
sigh saolas into my awakenings
and write saiga on my palms…
Speak tongues to me.
Daintree¹

I pierce the surface into clarity
of river with its bouldered drops of gray,
where the world flows slowly in the Daintree.

I feel chlorinated society
become water-swept and dissolve away;
I pierce the surface into clarity.

I sink to the bottom’s stone-polished scree
and am held in the liquid crystal sway
while the world flows slowly in the Daintree.

Silence sings as I find an apogee
and the tremblings that shook my soul are stayed.
I pierce the surface into clarity

And the world distills to a purity
that awes me. Deep underwater this way,
feel the world flow slowly in the Daintree.

The water is my mind in acuity,
the rounded rocks like swells of memory;
I pierced my surface into clarity
and the world slowed flowingly in the Daintree.
1. The name of both a river and a national park in Queensland, Australia