

EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL

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I.

**While we were talking about the ash-cloud,
a black ant
made a filigree pattern on the floor.**

**The rest of the conversation is censored:
little black rectangles
cover our eyes and mouths.**

**How friendly is the ash-cloud?
Will it reach the market?
Will it coat the strawberries and kale?**

**Nature has a plan for all of us.
You will succumb to the vapors.
My plan involves gillyvors;**

**and the ant, if you've watched closely,
has spelled out
HELP ME on the floor.**

II.

I've got a personal ash-cloud,
but the whole world is implicated in it.

I whisper part of its name in your ear,
like an anagram of a word that wasn't a word to begin with.

Yet the whole word takes a lifetime to say:
every word I say in my life is part of it.

I tell you how the closed captioning, set to Spanish,
translated a phrase as "un gigante skwolffment": that is the ash-
cloud.

I say the word "skulls" in my sleep? That too is the ash-cloud. I
call you
at midnight? Ash-cloud. I whistle "Dixie"? Ash-cloud, ash-cloud,
ash-cloud!

(That night the weatherman says "pumulous," laughs,
tries to correct himself, can't find the right word, moves on with
the forecast.)

III.

Presuming I'm not in the ash-cloud,
presuming my mouth isn't stuffed with ash,
I'm free to walk along the esplanade,

where irrational thought balloons
of cotton candy bob over the vendors' heads
and a busker plays *Lonesome Day Blues*.

I'm sampling all the fortune tellers.
I'm free to wander under the umbrellas,
free to stop at the puppet show, to watch

as the Devil, for once, triumphs over Punch—
presuming I'm not in the ash-cloud.
Presuming I'm not made of ash.

IV.

Week three of the ash-cloud:

Magicians with pendulums stole everything I own. Owned.

Week four of the ash-cloud:

Where are the polydactyllic cats I used to feed fish-scrap by the docks?

Week five of the ash-cloud:

I'm in love with a woman named Replica.

Week six of the ash-cloud: I dial wrong numbers on purpose. I like to apologize to strangers.

Week seven of the ash-cloud: I am slowly dispersing. A slight breeze... there go my ears. And it's bye-bye to my eyebrows. They'll be found in a field the next state over...

O Replica!

V.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Ourang-Outang must have ASH-CLOUD from the chamber, by the rod, just before the ASH-CLOUD of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was subsequently ASH-CLOUD by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the *Jardin des* ASH-CLOUD. ASH-CLOUD was instantly released, upon our ASH-CLOUD of the circumstances (with some comments from ASH-CLOUD) at the *bureau* of the Prefect of Police. This functionary, however well disposed to my friend, could not altogether conceal his ASH-CLOUD at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in an ASH-CLOUD or two, about the propriety of every person minding his own ASH-CLOUD.

VI.

**I put my faith in folly
because it's most reliable.**

**Ghosts love the news:
to distract them,
glue newspapers to the walls.**

**Ladies and dwarves of the jury,
the juncos are laughing.
The ash-cloud is moving.**