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Dependency

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DEPENDENCY

**MICHELLE
CHAN BROWN**

If you dirty your mouth—reach up,
you'll always find another. If you're stung,
put on lipstick before you suck out
the venom. Self-love is of the utmost

importance. But the chargé frowns
on excess of potassium. (Insects abound.)
Stay long enough, look hard enough,
you'll begin to see beauty, pity the beetle

his exoskeleton. Pity the spider her illusion
of mastery. Pity the fly her knitting;
she may be a mother, corner of her eye
window-tilted, waiting for the car to pull up.

Don't wash your feet—the floor is packed
with shells. Don't close your ears—the false
sea is full of secrets. Don't drink the water.
Many of the mouths have locks. Rust rears up

in underground conditions. As for your hands?
They're all you've got. Of course there's food.
A green abundance of ivy from the ancestral
balustrades, served in a mismatched set of cracked

bowls. Someone is avid for little touches that sense called home. Potpourri ghosts in the drawers.

Break the laces of your running shoes. Criticisms, your stinging words, your loamy doubts—

into the manila envelope. Seal it with duct tape and, naturally, a kiss. Note that there is no exit. If you feel fear, eat it. May it stick like a caterpillar to your throat. Little swallow, swallow it.

It dissolves to sweetness. Try starvation: you'll slip between the synaptic cracks. If you lack discipline, stretch yourself until you are limpid as an ocean. Accept impermanence. Refuse liquids.

Thus effloresced, you may relax. Accept the flush of your due, the accolades as various as stalagmites. You are as a cave. You are the new space. Soon enough, we can breathe and sleep inside you. Practice it, practice it. Forgetting your name.