

How to Remember

Meredith Quartermain

I who plays I collects worm food in a green bucket. I'm Green, says the bucket, which is plastic and therefore not green. My worms – do they feel owned? – live in a plastic composter – black, cone-shaped like sawdust burners at mills or coiled beehives on honey jars, though I has only ever seen bees living in stacked rectangles or old tree trunks. This rainy day They who I calls worms crawl up inside the black shell of their beehive to air holes I has punched for bacteria and worm breath. Ones I calls They inch toward the crack of light at the edge of the lid then bumble over beehive rim in higgledy-piggledy knots and tangles unravelling to streaks of pink cursive script in some unimaginable libretto. Writing across the curving ungreen black surface, they clench, unclench, ooze mucus to stick in wriggling ropes of glistening wormskin new as baby lips. Could there be a human version of this lazy, tangled wormflesh, this skin-melted-to-skin

limb-mingled limbo, this moist, gainless breathing togetherness somewhere outside Encyclopedia World where everyone has anatomy, reproduction, taxonomy, and economic benefit – somewhere outside the unreal Reality that writes, Earthworms who eat rotting leaves in temperate forests are invasive species, but *Homo sapiens* who burn down forests for hamburger farms are creating wealth?

I lifts the wormhouse lid – flash of light – hail the food god – splash and thud rain down from green bucket. I pretends to be They who I calls worm, pretends They make I a god, then thinks, Not Food, not god, just tube mouthing apple core, carrot peel, banana skin, radish tops, grass cuttings. I who plays I pretends to be They who I calls worm, swims through potato peels, brown leaves – not leaves, not potato – not names of anything – just writing along surfaces with myriad feet I calls bristles – mouth open, matter outside, matter in-

side. Tubular chew through tangles of fleshy script and trails of castings for I who plays I in whose comedy? Imagining sex between They who I calls worm, They who make black gold for I. They in naked glistening embrace, each thrusting penis into other, each enfolding, each holding out clitoris to be stroked.

Oh, I thinks, speaking in her play, how biology texts carp on about reproduction, that factory for making life units so valuable to *Homo sapiens*. What if I, emptying wormhouse, taking worm gold, is to They a giant womforce, gobbling all and thrashing all to bits? I digs in fork. Pounds of clinging wriggling wormflesh fly light-blinded then world jolt upside down flat flump body daze. I, who plays I in this unserious deadly play, forks and forgets. How They I calls worms now have fork-torn bodies They may slowly regrow the way I who I calls I cannot – if only They who I calls worms are not crushed too badly.



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