

## DEAR :: DEAR

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*Jennifer Richter & BT Shaw*

flug :: fly  
flug :: flying  
flugskeyti :: missile  
flugvöllinn :: airport  
**fluttir :: transferred**  
flyja :: escape

Getting 7,000 miles away takes wings

and a fuselage, last stop Vietnam  
where years ago in Cho Ben Thanh

I watched locals barter for nests

made by flocks of swiftlets,  
one of only two birds like bats

that use echolocation in the caves

they call home. You don't have  
an address yet, gone only days;

your map's a nest of pieced-together

streets but I'm the one a little lost.  
In the dark the swiftlets find their way.

*Fluttir*: the sound of leaving.

You're fifteen hours ahead.  
Tell me what happens next.

myndi :: photo  
myndi ::  
myndina :: drawing  
myrða :: murder, kill  
myrkrinu :: darkness  
**myrkyr :: dark**

For a month, the same to-do list.

Rise, dress, leave the house, stop  
talking only to myself.

Tonight the corner *caphe* guy laughs when I open  
my mouth, then tutors me in *cold, sugar, to-go cup*.  
*Relax*, he says. *Here verbs have no tense*.

Above him, the television broadcasts news  
from the country we call ours — it's your dawn  
on my day that's done. A man with some

number of guns walked into a school, what happened  
next is hard to catch. *Monstrous*, the lipsticked reporter  
says — or was it *one of us*.

**standpinu :: erection**

stein (n) :: stone

steina :: rocks

steinhamar :: rock hammer

stelpur :: girls

sterk :: strong

I'm wearing a life jacket on the dock  
slick with bait. The pines standing around

are all trunk — their needly green surge  
at the tip-top: out of the picture

like the boys, spent in their orange tents.  
My first fish: silvery-thin, stiff.

I'm six, squinting, saying something.  
I can't hold it far enough away.

barnaleg :: immature  
**barnanna minna :: my kids**  
báðir :: both  
báðir, bæði :: both  
bátnum, bátinn :: boat  
beit, bítið :: bit (with teeth)

Banana. Minnow.

*You raised  
by wolves?  
I'd ask.*

Rasp. Hasp.

Standing back.

dó :: dies, died  
dónalegur :: rude  
**dóttir :: daughter**  
draga :: drag, pull  
dramatik :: drama  
drap :: killed

A habit like sleep — how the mind rewinds  
given a divot of time. That winter — so cold  
carp froze in the river's gloves. She ran

into snow falling like wool from a comb.  
In this version I'm standing in the kitchen  
with a paring knife — another I'm on the dock

wearing my life like a rocket pack sans fuel,  
snow falling like millet for birds. Like tulle.  
Regardless she's a bolt in a rare thunder-

snow falling like torn corners like love —  
which seemed the right tool for the job. Snow  
like its own plow like that June like blow-

torch stars falling over the bridge she is almost  
out of reach now snow falling like clover like  
what comes next like hope like teeth.

**fuglakona :: birdlady**

fuglinn :: bird

fulkomnu :: perfect

fullkomar :: perfect

fulltrui, fultrui :: fake

fundum :: found

Way up in the tip  
of the striped tent  
she's a nosedive  
stopped midflight.  
Stacked beneath her  
balancing act: ladder,  
platform, child-sized  
plastic stool. A little  
front-row boy jumps  
up, scurries in the ring-  
side dirt, keeps his  
worried eyes on her —

the acrobat  
in shiny  
white, arms  
outstretched,  
silent owl  
headed for  
the mouse.

ræda :: about  
**ræðum** :: **secrets**  
rætur :: roots  
röð :: line, queue  
röndum :: shadow  
röng :: wrong

Two thousand miles, then the caldera.  
One season's wildfire is another's bowlful

of absence. Shadows milled the tuff  
like tourists who'd missed the last bus.

An insomniac owl tracked gestures through  
the grass. Vole, perhaps. Skull rush —

what we didn't say. Squinch-fisted gods  
who listened anyway.

ganga :: walking  
gardana :: gardens  
gáfuð :: clever  
gefðu :: give  
**geimfari :: astronaut**  
gengis :: luck

Risky: orbiting the moon  
alone. Though not alone:

500 tree seeds he tended  
up there then brought home.

Though he's long gone —  
Stuart Roosa, engine of

no more experiments —  
a Moon Tree towers above

our town, Doug Fir reaching  
back into that black. Imagine:

it was said the seeds were  
*unaffected by their trip.*