

# Adam Tavel

## Selections from *Plash & Levitation*

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“Aubade for Sesame Street at 3:27 a.m. Ending with a Line from Snyder”

Synchronized, the Muppet ones  
sway peppermint canes  
with fishing line visible  
below their cardboard stage.  
An off-key Frank Oz warbles  
how glorious it is to be  
a stroke, a streak, a floating  
bone, simply perpendicular  
to the earth and counted  
first, the carnelian match-head  
of infinity yet yourself  
divided by yourself is still  
yourself. The putrescence  
of formula puke wafts  
from two ruined towels  
heaped and sopping in the tub.  
There is no other life.

“Cento from the Church of the Nazarene's Advent Marquee “

Our God of limitless supply  
behold the star everlasting  
who wails in a manger  
all the ribbon in the world  
no X can replace Him  
join our fast honoring  
four trucks with Fraser Firs  
at the kingdom's gates  
during our pancake social  
the charity pageant raises  
our annex roof's repairs  
where Your dove descends  
with no limit on poinsettias or  
the midnight service wreath  
if you can brave the ice

“The Wolfman's Confession to the Salisbury Police Department”

Steam escaping from a chipped tureen  
of broccoli cheddar soup is the last thing  
I remember. My math teacher date  
had just wrinkled her nose at the awful  
nearness of a baby grand tinkling  
in the vestibule. It was a bad table.  
I wish I could say the gray expanse

of cloud that cleared revealed  
a saucer moon, that I felt my fur  
prickle through my pores and howling  
I threw my head back cinematically  
as the change came on. But it was steam,  
then waking naked in scrubby boxwood  
behind marina benches. Some eternity

I spent plucking shards from my palms.  
My date's ochre skirt was a kite streamer.  
With her bones I made a tidy mound  
before shivering like an arctic diver  
through traffic. This all flashes back  
like glistening hoods of yellow cabs  
in rain. Five times I've been shot

by your department—each round  
puckers an oozy mouth that closes  
without speaking. You're the third  
detective who's smoked and smirked  
while taping my confession. By dawn  
these cuffs will be pink nebulae  
around my wrists. By noon

I'll purple my fingertips flossing  
marrow from my teeth with your hair.  
But in that holy brief amnesia, those seconds  
when breezes lick my claws receding,  
I'll trace the heart-carved teens' initials  
on the chests of dockside oaks where

each name the tide kicks back is wrong.

“Into The Primitive”

A subterranean blue pulses under  
our feet as the escalator coasts us  
closer to Cretaceous fog and a railing  
concertinaed in plastic vines  
where a plaid girl leans jabbing  
PLAY on an installation that floods  
the mezzanine with a pterodactyl's  
kamikaze caw. It makes me paw

for father's thumb as our group glides  
into the primitive, a rumpled envelope  
of permissions in his Carhartt pocket.  
*Holy shit* he says and I say it too,  
gawking at a triceratops frozen  
in a histrionic snarl that says  
I'll gore the shit from your very guts.  
It's the coolest thing I've ever seen—

two horns reared at styrofoam asteroids  
strung in the purple nothing, ready  
to pummel walnut brains to smithereens.  
My own walnut brain knows the velvet  
rope around these husky flanks  
means mucky hands should grub  
some other wonder, like the night

I squeezed basement screams that rode  
each furnace blast of dragon breath  
through the register. I lay on my glowing  
*Land Before Time* sheets until I stripped  
to underoos and felt steel slats scald  
the bare boy skin of my back, as if  
a burn could make their screaming stop  
the way summer rain pelts a house  
into dreaming morning won't have

the mulberry of a bruise. Beyond is heaven,  
the Hall of Extinction where fingers stained

with sidewalk pretzel mustard are free  
to smear cases of mammoth tusks,  
a plastic quagga with her foal and the last  
known living *canis lupus rufus*, stuffed  
“since 1930 beside a first edition *Call* “

*of the Wild*, splayed at page 13: *no  
warning, only a leap, a flash, the metallic  
clip of teeth*. When the last patron  
is a cane's echo fading, our tribe  
bellows for the rest of Sister Blaise's  
class beneath the beast, flicking  
a Nicene Creed paper football

through finger goalposts. Here  
I learn four boys gasping  
sounds the same as my mother's shudder  
when dad swoops me by my belt loops  
so I can stroke the stitch  
pinning back a saurian's sneer  
in the gunmetal leather of its cheek.

