

Five Prose Poems from Data Mind

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YOUR ICK IS MY YUM

I was looking up anagrams of my middle name when I heard a scratching from uncategorized bivalves establishing a new species beneath the carpet. Thus began my life as a clam-cognizant, neo-olfactory, intra-confessional, proto-shambolic coordinologist, and ended my career as a poet. I didn't mourn it. I was sitting on my balance ball and throwing pieces of masticated popcorn at the screen when the possibilities of canned air overcame my fear of carnivorous plants. I realized that the shortest distance between the monitor and refrigerator was through the blockchain, and this was one of many revelations which would come to loosen the thread of spittle connecting meaning to matter. Finally, I could hear the thunderous stomping of the child upstairs without missing my toddlerhood, and I didn't mind that my aging torso was replaced with a small, square house. If my eyes were actually windows, I was happy to draw the blinds.

HOW MANY INTERNETS DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHTBULB?

The young man whose braces once scratched your gums is now old. He lives alone in a city with no buses.

Static replaces your arthritic knee.

The girl whose red hair hypnotized the elementary school is appointed the head of advertising for a company that manufactures tourniquets—or is it knives?

The waterfalls within the cave of your mouth are now error messages.

You wake up each day inside an actual computer and claim it's possible to unplug.

The version of yourself that once haunted dive-bar bathrooms has been sober for 118 years.

A cursor is your blinking eye.

Meanwhile, a woman complains that her ex-husband has married a mannequin, but she's a mannequin too.

In the same 10-by-10 meat locker, two presidents lead two nations. Each speaks a language only one citizen understands.

You compose your manifesto in stick-on eyelashes, stand on the rocking chair to yell at the ceiling fan, but there is no rocking chair.

Years later, the mainframe is inside of you instead of you inside of it.

Your heart beats in binary code. Your finger points everywhere but here.

OUT THE WINDOW, A CAT'S CRY IS A PORTAL TO THE INTERNET OF NEED

A man with a daffodil face pretends to sing opera in the shower.

A woman with a tuba for legs moans for a working socket.

The television opens its mouth and another television falls out.

The two sides of my headphones split apart, the left moves to Florida, the right takes up residence on the moon.

Before long, I am screaming so loud that the dogs in China eat each other's bones and brains and shit out 1,034 miniature plastic dogs.

My skin curls itself around the digital clock.

My eyes switch places with each other.

Everyone I ever knew hides their wallets in my sofa, and their cash in the dying spider plant.

The picture of a cat in heat falls off the wall and turns into a living beast.

Under the bookshelf, the mice play hospital. We pretend the sound of their lovemaking is an ambulance on the way.

THE HAUNTED HOUSEPLANT

We spend the night wondering if the murmured-to cantaloupes will be able to ride their winged chariots again. Will the celestial guillotines awaken? Can the ass of the past sprout fangs? Or at least teeth?

When will my computer open its eyes? Will my hard drive rip off its database and reveal its washboard abs? How will we replace the search engine with energetic moss? Can we finally rip away the monitor's gold-plated strap on?

I pretend sometimes that I know we will be happy again, able to lick the sludge off our lips, to chomp on pearly apples whose crunchy authenticity will erase the moonscapes we lost. Sometimes I am able to conjure up the beauty of this pause—can glimpse the cat's whiskers conducting the star's silent music.

Can you see it too? Can you feel it blowing through the thin hairs on your limbs?

NO ONE COULD FORGET THE UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER

Where do the doctors go when the x-ray convention gets canceled? What sort of ice machine keeps the water constantly moving? What monster fits best in a fur purse? Why don't trees fall apart when you cry? What's the opposite of a scar? Why undo a why?

What could have been a future in mountaineering was just a remote control in lederhosen. What could have been an answer to a question was instead a series of questions, each progressively smaller in size, as if they'd been arranged by a god with a too refined sense of humor.

"Like Santa Claus with a cold," you said dismissively.

By Tuesday morning, all language started to sound like a secret shared through a pixie cup on a string. Despite the sideways look I gave the bartender, I preferred life this way. It kept the brain-sized mushroom clouds in check.

