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Corey Van Landingham

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The Chair & The Birdcage

No one has come to see them, and no one will. *We belong together* their morning refrain. In the early light the Chair and Birdcage debate the pastoral. Its over-arching despair. All those damn bleating sheep. The exogenous shepherd and his devilish superstitions. The split-open head of the cow. Irreverent, elegant flying formations of some dark, too-large birds. Here the Cage weeps, not for the Chair whose leg is now perpetually half-breaking, but for itself. For what it has lost. The Chair insists the shepherd is wise and noble. Because it would like to be knocked around, a little more touching. The Chair insists the sheep *want* the cane, the shears. And they are facing each other, the Chair,

the Birdcage, they can see that this means everything. And they are trying to reason, they are the last two left. They will start a new life together.

It will be sweet, it will exist under a constant, dizzy, sugar-spell of rain. There will be baths with dried flowers poured into the water. There will be swooning and warm milk and a small porch to watch the weather. Chair says: *Turn around.* Chair says: *Turn around and shut up.* Cage obeys—

this must be what love is like. The Birdcage swivels its hips to the field below and sees all the animals it never got to hold. How absolute it seems, the distance. *Tie up your hair.* The horses that must have once been wild. *Close your eyes.* The lightning-blackened branches. The stranger it will never touch. *Close your eyes.* The long unbraiding of the far-below river the river the river and the shepherd with his face hidden as he bends to drink.