

Abecedarian Cento: After Death

After death, it's so easy¹ // The lazy Susan
Becomes the place where the lazy Susan used to be² // Half-gods

Carrying pipes³ // dip their throats and come out

Dreaming⁴ /// In those pools, iron insects
Engraved in sleep wake like⁵ // the coroner

Found minnows swimming in a drowned girl's lungs⁶ // I saw

God, I used the wrong pronouns⁷ // while I am inside
Him, while we are kissing and his arms are around my neck⁸

// If only flickeringly, each day astounds me⁹ //

Just this morning a horse with his empty carriage waiting for some tourist to pull made me so
sad¹⁰

// Kierkegaard shuttles past Reason to planet Absurd, a gas giant without a detectable
Landing pad¹¹ /// Perhaps we should reframe.
Mary Ruefle says *The Odyssey* was probably sung by sirens because

None of us can turn away from the tragedy of¹² // the mind that shapes, the *bumblebee's* name
out of

Onomatopoeic *bombeln*¹³ // a joy passed down like a chainless
Pocket watch¹⁴ /// Dear Forgiveness, I saved a plate for you.

¹ Monticello House Tour // Kiki Petrosino

² Piano Lesson // Richard Siken

³ And the Word for Moonlight Is My Name // Jai Hamid Bashir

⁴ Birthplace with Buried Stones // Meena Alexander

⁵ Severed Head Floating Downriver // Alice Oswald

⁶ Prelude to a Revolution // Traci Brimhall

⁷ Vines // Kaveh Akbar

⁸ As If from the Sea // C. Dale Young

⁹ Fist and Palm // Carl Phillips

¹⁰ My Husband Can't Stop Talking about the Sex Lives of Anglerfish // Mamie Morgan

¹¹ Study for Belief with Lines from "Star Trek: The Original Series" // Dayna Patterson

¹² Non-cento from the Bureau of the Library of Alexandria // Lucas Jorgensen

¹³ Bumblebee // Walter Anacarrow

¹⁴ The Pitchman's Joy Pitch // Ama Cojoe

Quit milling around the yard and come inside¹⁵ //
Remember that wingchair you loved, the one with a face like a lion¹⁶ // a lyric

Summoning¹⁷ // death? *Here*. The sun stills glare, but look how our skin smooths back
To youth¹⁸ // Who are we to question the Gods when a man

Unconcerned with the inconvenience of his presence shows up¹⁹ // sobbing out my name in a
wounded
Voice putrefied by time?²⁰ //

What does he already know, looking down to find the pattern?²¹ // I've strung

Xmas lights to the wall with a *Stranger Things* alphabet—²² //

You're like a sword, blue and green, and at my touch you undulate²³ // excelsis deo,
Zapping rust from our names.²⁴

¹⁵ Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out // Richard Siken

¹⁶ Monticello House Tour // Kiki Petrosino

¹⁷ Birthplace with Buried Stones // Meena Alexander

¹⁸ Counterclockwise & Frantic // V.C. McCabe

¹⁹ Bird // Niki Herd

²⁰ Ode with Lament // Pablo Neruda

²¹ Silo // Sophie Cabot Black

²² Headless Mama Returns (Xmas '18 Redux) // Jenn Givhan

²³ Ode with Lament // Pablo Neruda

²⁴ Emotional Intelligence // Pimone Triplett