Orphea
By: [Redacted]
Lyrics by: Told Slant

Songs in the Sadlands
echo for miles
only to fall
on dead ears
(or the cannibal ears
of Moonies,
if you’re unlucky).

I found this song
among lipstick lacquered
subway walls
and algae-bloom
in The Great Trash City,
all the way to
the Underworld.

Thank you for being here, traveler.

How’d it go again?
Dit dit dit, dah dah dah, dit dit dit….

Some years ago,
I couldn’t tell you exactly how many
(you know how time is here)
I sought the Underworld
to rescue her,
she who died of my birth.
Well, not just--
I mean--
it is said she couldn’t coexist
with the snake.
And so she had to die
of my birth.

I tried to forget about her, y’know.
But you just,
you can’t.
You can’t.
Paralytic states of dependency,
i guess.

I searched for some years,
(I couldn’t tell you exactly how many)
in every
abandoned fuck-bunker
and drowned phishing village.
Once, I dug
thirty-two holes on the beach;
thirty-two graves in the sand,
searching for the Underworld.

Disheartened and exhausted
I was about to give up
when I found the entrance
in a terrorformed mineshaft
dug by child-labor
under the maternity ward
run by the Nurse-Mother,
the sleeping self-birther.

The entrance to the Underworld
was blocked by brick.
My first thought was to start kicking
and hope it collapsed.
My second thought was
I needed a really big hammer.
My third thought,
the right thought,
was a song, found
scrawled scratchy with ink
in a dead witch’s apartment,
to Sara.
I stood on the precipice,
and I sang:
I said I’d give her life.
And I said I’d tell her all about the fire.

The bricks folded into themselves
like perfect orcagami.
And down I went,
down
down the bumpy stairs
into The Underworld.

Down the bumpy stairs
in the birth canal of the dead
I was surrounded
by arch-walls of rock.
I swear
blank slates became faces
despairing, contorting
for release.
And I swear
jagged hands brushed my skin,
trying to pull themselves
from the rocky membrane
with me as an anchor.

How can you be an anchor
when yr adrift?

After what seemed like years
I came to a river.
Uncountable faces drowning
forever,
grasping for branches
from the gnarled trees
that grew in the bottomless riverbed,
if they could just reach a little higher.
Just a little higher.

There was no boat,
nor safe passage to swim.  
No way across.

A thought came to me then:  
music had gotten me this far,  
and who knows how long it had been  
since these lost souls heard anything  
but their own agony.  
So I sang them a song.  
And as I sang  
they drowned silently,  
enraptured.  
And when I was done,  
they bore me across  
to a skeletal castle  
made from the bones of old Gods.  
If you looked at one bone long enough  
out of the corner of your eye  
you could see the old God’s shadow  
regarding you.

I entered.

Inside, I met them.  
The Lords of the Dead.  
They looked different than you’d expect.  
White, wafish lesbians,  
one androgynous and one feminine, all  
“cunts bite back” shirts  
pastel claws  
and asymmetrical bangs.  
The “quirky” Dykes of the Dead.

“Why did you come here?”  
they said,  
“Why is there one living  
who haunts the land of the dead?”  
I said I came for she  
who died of my birth,
to bring her back with me.
They replied,
“Convince us.”
And like I had before,
I sang them a song:

♫ It feels like we are in still water
it feels like we are on two different sides
of pine tree lines
I don't want to hear your sound bytes
I just want to hear what you sound like
I am the girl my parents made
why don't you love me anyway
I love the way you take up space-- ♫

They said they were moved.
They said they understood.
They offered me a deal:
walk out of the Underworld without looking back.
No matter what I heard,
no matter what I felt.
‘Even if the hounds of hell are at your heels,
you must not look back,’
they said.

I took their deal.
Gladly.

I walked for what seemed like decades.
Through caverns and crevices.
I didn’t look back.
Through crypts and crannies.
I didn’t look back.
It started low, like a rumble,
and became screams
like the tip of a knife dragged against a chalkboard.
I didn’t look back.
I felt my sweat licked off
by tongues in the dark.
I did not look back.
I felt teeth slice into my legs long after it happened,
felt hot breath crawl across my neck like insects.
I did not look back.
I heard the threat of skin
separating from muscle from bone
from itself
from the air around it
from reality itself.
I did not look back.
I DID NOT LOOK BACK.

No matter what, I did not look back.

Finally, I saw it:
the way out.
A hole of light so bright I,
I couldn’t hope to see through it.
It was so close.
I stepped forward
my fingertips began to pierce the light

Behind me,
I heard her fall.
Heard her trip on something,
heard her head hit the jagged rock
below my feet
felt her blood on my skin
though there was no way no way no
waynowaynowayno--

I looked back.
And Orphea was gone.

i don’t know how long ago that was.
Been travelin’ ever since.
Had a companion for awhile.
A little deer named Zeph
who lived in my guitar
before he wrapped himself up in a cocoon
and emerged a bear.
He left the nest
and walked into the horizon.
“See ya later, space bear boi…."
Now it’s just me,
lookin’ for a place to pray.

Thank you, traveler.
I know it’s been a long tale
and a tall one at that.
And I know that’s a lot, and
and thank you.
Thank you, traveler.

Goodbye.

Dit dit dit, dah dah dah, dit dit….dit….