

Emu Girl, on the day before flying

I

Remember that night
last summer under the Milky Way?
'Why's it called milky?' you asked.
'Could have been snowy, sugar,
baking powder.' It was hot enough
night after a scorcher, sky sun-bleached
parrot calls staccato'd into SOS.

The night a diamond fell
east of the moon

II

*The brother twins fought bravely
when sky-birds came and broke the light
splattered like Pollock's Lavender Mist
sparks dipped in suns dragged through coal-black
emu feathers, where Tchingal spread his
flightless wings and laid his beak to rest upon
the Southern Cross. Swallowed, the brothers
hunkered down, red and blue their thundering hearts
Hadar's weight bore him to his knees
while Toliman sprouted fantastical scales, atonal
shadows toning the Pointers' siren call until
their gate must open ultraviolet waveforms deep
subtonic scores, vestral lanterns strung across
Milky galactic sector four*

The fleet's burnished arcs shine red and pulse a single note

III

‘Did you know a tiny gland inside your brain
 secretes rhodopsin, catches flashes of invisible light?
 Pineal pea cradled in its grail, vestigial holy camera
 spooling angel feathers through the Eye of Ra?’
 A hawk’s shadow rolls over silvered grass, its call
 runs down the hill, I touch your face
 stars berth softly in your eyes

IV

*4.2 light years from Earth, Proxima Centauri
 floats, veiled to human eyes, though Hubble reveals
 her pure diminished gold, while her Alpha-Beta brothers
 hold Nan Men, the Southward Gate, their hoofs
 fresh-shod await a tonal shift, celestial smithy
 ablaze, sounds of snow, or milk, cascading
 through the belly of the bird. Confederate ships
 mass in horseshoe clusters, winking lights –
 amber, golden, red – speak a language of the mind
 and heated heart, their stare the orange iris
 of emu’s eye, watching starlit interface*

V

You notice clouds shift subtly into birds
 wingtip pointers north to south
 your mind’s eye rotates the globe, while I
 consult old world stellaria, Deneb, glittering
 blue-white giant, Swantail’s polar rudder
 I trace the Northern Cross. Biosphere emissions
 echo through hollow bones. ‘Are they coming?’
 Your fingers brush strands of down
 between my hair. Your smile is kind

VI

Centaurus. 'Cen', *Classical Greek, conflation of kainos (new) and koinos (common)* – 'taurus', *Latin bull* –

*Avian genomes quickened, new bulls multiplied
legs grew long and swift, tails streamed
on interstellar winds, scales hardened skin
vambraces wrapped their forearms, polished
reflecting light of brother suns, gaze turned upward
smoky feathers in their hair, hoofs pressed deep
they raced for young blue planets, thirsty
aeons they rode until swansongs
blossomed in their breasts. Do you
remember that night?*

VII

'Hold them like this.' You cup my hands in yours
grail-like, or a horseshoe. I squint at the sun too bright
between the mounds of Kata Tjuta. *Look up, love, higher.*
Lights pulse red, long crescents, burnished
interstitial stars pierce Earth's magnetic quilt
diving to this southern land.

I spread my arms
to steer them
home