

MAY

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“Under a rain of blows, the rebellious child shook with laughter, exposing his throat; not one so much as touched him.”

— *Claude Cahun*

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EXOTHERWSE



photograph by Claude Cahun

In Bed, Learning About Bed Bugs

Bat Collazo

A little beetle, black and white, walks by on fitted bedsheet
as I wake up from my nap,
my lonely lover cuddlebug against my back.
I take the closed package of an alcohol wipe
and, to this less familiar creature's alarm and dismay, make gentle transfer
to the nightstand. Only after, fearing persecution,
I confirm online: lost in bed, but not a bed bug.
In etymology, I am unsurprised to learn:
bed bug, bugge, bwg, hobgoblin.
Being bothered at night, as it were: visited.
In entomology, still tucked in blankets,
we watch a longform film about bed bugs,
the transparent slurpee of blood
gushing into the bag of their bodies,
the penchant for tall dowels
in the hopes of human feet once ascended,
like climbing a beanstalk.
The dandruff debris of exoskeletons raining
from corners of mattresses,
the machine that heats houses like skyscrapers heat desert
when there's not enough trees.
It's fossilized ashes, the scientist says,
that really kills them, sending them away to die of thirst,
desiccated. They carry no diseases, however,
which is why
they are very good
at living with humans.