

SUSPEND

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NANCY KUHL

Published in the United Kingdom in 2010 by Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD
www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-086-6

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DESIGN Megan Mangum, Words That Work
AUTHOR PHOTO Michael Marsland

M is for Megan

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Pillcase & Passport

Handbag stories contain
themselves, fictions
tucked into tiny blue books:

a plot can turn on the slightest,
can hinge on tongue barely
extended, small gesture

of thumb and forefinger; or
the twist is the document's
smeared ink, its holographic

insignia glinting under guard-
light. Our heroine is contained,
stamped, stickered, stuck

in the folds. In an unfamiliar
train station she looks down,
reaches into the dark

cavity of her purse and
a conductor calls the names
of all the cities on the line.

Insomniac Alphabet

A for almanac, always all ways; A,
 an amulet glittering, transient as anger
B for blackbirds, breeze and bluster
C, curse and catch; for *certain*
D for door frame, door shadow; D is divide
E for egg; E: this expression, this evasion
F, false start false indigo false rib
G is gone like a gone like a train
H for hold, hollow; H, a hand palm flat
I is for *I anchor my ship for a little while only*
J is for July and the windows wide
K, the key in the lock, keeper at the gate
L, the low sky, color of lead; L: slow faucet drip
M, a red morning empty, my mind made up

The hot blue month spent and miles past. Once we set off. Swirl into meadowsweet, sheep pasture, quarry trucks rattling; climb the stone walls of a ruined convent. Such days continue beyond all expectation. If we. O, if.

Where we left them, next week and next year open their pointed and aching mouths, beg and beg. The old the old *what will we* and *eventually* have been cornered, but not easily. Controlled barely in the placement of teacups, the mail piled by the door, the blanket I fold in the morning and rest at the foot of the bed. *Next*, with jaws flapping and creaking. This is homecoming finally and beginning. The corner of Pleasant.

Still days away. Now, a magician, I suspend a thousand questions above a green mountain, above the cemetery monuments. Fling their wings their bodies skyward. Spin their feathery forms away to the horizon.

W is for Wide Awake

In the little dream
of fish and boys

(scaly and glittering) I
choose the wrong

hand balled behind
someone's back and

there will be
consequences.

o, wet blue heart
push, push
yes please, yes

A is for approximate and arrowroot;
automatic; almanac; A is for alphabet

...

F, the false potency of a placebo or a flirtation

Suspend

The momentary practice
is routine and dazzling; a body
almost never gets wise to it.
Rarely refuses. Suspend:
to postpone, hang up. Anatomy
designed to, destined to move and
move forward, streamlined, polished
and gleaming; programmed
for velocity. But. Suspend,
dangle and sway glittering
above the blue world: dragonfly or
a glider fixed mid-flight. Catch
and hold, hovering nearly invisible,
there above everything.

Lovelier than reason, nothing
else will break the twilight:
my body above each bad sea.

our heroine is liberated, let loose, leaving
through the back door;
she is at the wheel
driving into a promised and promising night,
taking the corner tight and too fast

Mother, what is marriage?

Spinning, giving birth, and then regret.

Tightrope

Here, take
the glowing girl
overhead for
instance. How,
for her, distance
(rope to net, net to
floor) expands and
blank space (her
uncertainty) tells
story after story.
But *breath*—
that's something
else. Altogether.
For her, breath
is a preoccupation
with tension with
the way the wire
moves.