



**NO ONE  
IS TALKING  
ABOUT THIS**

**PATRICIA  
LOCKWOOD**

*A Novel by  
the author of  
Priestdaddy*

Also by Patricia Lockwood

MEMOIR

*Priestdaddy*

POETRY

*Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals*

*Balloon Pop Outlaw Black*

**No One  
is Talking  
About This**

Patricia  
Lockwood

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*for Lena, who was a bell*

There will be!

People!

On the sun!

Soon!

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY,  
“I and Napoleon”

# Part One

She opened the portal, and the mind met her more than halfway. Inside, it was tropical and snowing, and the first flake of the blizzard of everything landed on her tongue and melted.

Close-ups of nail art, a pebble from outer space, a tarantula's compound eyes, a storm like canned peaches on the surface of Jupiter, Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*, a chihuahua perched on a man's erection, a garage door spray-painted with the words STOP! DON'T EMAIL MY WIFE!

Why did the portal feel so private, when you only entered it when you needed to be everywhere?

■ ■ ■

She felt along the solid green marble of the day for the hairline crack that might let her out. This could not be forced. Outside, the air hung swagged and the clouds sat in piles of couch stuffing, and in the south of the sky there was a tender spot, where a rainbow wanted to happen.

Then three sips of coffee, and a window opened.

■ ■ ■

I'm convinced the world is getting too full lol, her brother texted her, the one who obliterated himself at the end of every day with a personal comet called Fireball.

■ ■ ■

Capitalism! It was important to hate it, even though it was how you got money. Slowly, slowly, she found herself moving toward a position so philosophical even Jesus couldn't have held it: that she

must hate capitalism while at the same time loving film montages set in department stores.

■ ■ ■

Politics! The trouble was that they had a dictator now, which, according to some people (white), they had never had before, and according to other people (everyone else), they had only ever been having, constantly, since the beginning of the world. Her stupidity panicked her, as well as the way her voice now sounded when she talked to people who hadn't stopped being stupid yet.

The problem was that the dictator was very funny, which had maybe always been true of all dictators. Absurdism, she thought. Suddenly all those Russian novels where a man turns into a teaspoonful of blackberry jam at a country house began to make sense.

■ ■ ■

What had the beautiful thought been, the bright profundity she had roused herself to write down? She opened her notebook with the sense of anticipation she always felt on such occasions—perhaps this would finally be it, the one they would chisel on her gravestone. It read:

*chuck e cheese can munch a hole in my you-know-what*

■ ■ ■

After you died, she thought as she carefully washed her legs under the fine needles of water, for she had recently learned that some people didn't, you would see a little pie chart that told you how much of your life had been spent in the shower arguing with people you had never met. Oh but like that was somehow less worthy than spending your time carefully monitoring the thickness of beaver houses for signs of the severity of the coming winter?

■ ■ ■

Was she *stimming*? She feared very much that she was.

■ ■ ■

Things that were always there:

The sun.

Her body, and the barest riffling at the roots of her hair.

An almost music in the air, unarranged and primary and swirling, like yarns laid out in their colors waiting.

The theme song of a childhood show where mannequins came to life at night in a department store.

Anonymous History Channel footage of gray millions on the march, shark-snouted airplanes, silk deployments of missiles, mushroom clouds.

An episode of *True Life* about a girl who liked to oil herself up, get into a pot with assorted vegetables, and pretend that cannibals were going to eat her. Sexually.

The almost-formed unthought, Is there a bug on me???

A great shame about all of it, all of it.

■ ■ ■

Where had the old tyranny gone, the tyranny of husband over wife? She suspected most of it had been channeled into weird ideas about supplements, whether or not vinyl sounded “warmer,” and which coffeemakers were nothing but *a shit in the mouth of the coffee christ*. “A hundred years ago you would have been mining coal and had fourteen children all named Jane,” she often marveled, as she watched a man stab a finger at his wife in front of the Keurig display. “Two hundred years ago, you might have been in a coffee shop in Göttingen, shaking the daily paper, hashing out the questions of the day—and I would be shaking out sheets from the windows, not

knowing how to read.” But didn’t tyranny always feel like the hand of the way things were?

■ ■ ■

It was a mistake to believe that other people were not living as deeply as you were. Besides, you were not even living that deeply.

■ ■ ■

The amount of eavesdropping that was going on was enormous, and the implications not yet known. Other people’s diaries streamed around her. Should she be listening, for instance, to the conversations of teenagers? Should she follow with such avidity the compliments that rural sheriffs paid to porn stars, not realizing that other people could see them? What about the thread of women all realizing they had the exact same scar on their knee? “I have that scar too!” a white woman piped up, but was swiftly and efficiently shut down, because it was not the same, she had interrupted an usness, the world in which she got that scar was not the same.

■ ■ ■

She lay every morning under an avalanche of details, blissed, pictures of breakfasts in Patagonia, a girl applying her foundation with a hard-boiled egg, a shiba inu in Japan leaping from paw to paw to greet its owner, ghostly pale women posting pictures of their bruises—the world pressing closer and closer, the spiderweb of human connection grown so thick it was almost a shimmering and solid silk, and the day still not opening to her. What did it mean that she was allowed to see this?

If she began to bite her lower lip, as she nearly always did after the milk and civet-cat bitterness of her morning coffee, she went into the bathroom with the ivy growing out its bangs outside the window and very carefully painted her mouth a definite, rich, top-of-the-piano red—as if she had an underground club to be at later that night, where she would go as bare as a missing sequin, where she would distill the whole sunset cloud of human feeling to a six-word lyric.

■ ■ ■

Something in the back of her head hurt. It was her new class consciousness.

■ ■ ■

Every day their attention must turn, like the shine on a school of fish, all at once, toward a new person to hate. Sometimes the subject was a war criminal, but other times it was someone who made a heinous substitution in guacamole. It was not so much the hatred she was interested in as the swift attenuation, as if their collective blood had made a decision. As if they were a species that released puffs of poison, or black ink in a cloud on the ocean floor. I mean, have you read that article about octopus intelligence? Have you read how octopuses are marching out of the sea and onto dry land, in slick and obedient armies?

■ ■ ■

“Ahahaha!” she yelled, the new and funnier way to laugh, as she watched footage of bodies being flung from a carnival ride at the Ohio State Fair. Their trajectories through the air were pure arcs of joy, T-shirts turned liquid on them, just look what the flesh could do when it gave in, right down to the surrendering snap of the . . .

“What’s so hilarious,” said her husband, resting sideways on his chair with his bladelike shins dangling over one arm, but by then she had scrolled down the rest of the thread and seen that someone was dead, and five others hanging half in and half out of the world. “Oh God!” she said as she realized. “Oh Christ, no, oh God!”

■ ■ ■

At nine o’clock every night she gave up her mind. Renounced it, like a belief. Abdicated it, like a throne, all for love. She went to the freezer and opened that fresh air on her face and put fingerprints in the frost on the neck of a bottle and poured something into a glass that was very very clear. And then she was happy, though she worried every night, as you never do with knowledge, whether there would be enough.

■ ■ ■

Inside the portal, a man who three years ago only ever posted things like “I’m a retard with butt aids” was now exhorting people to open their eyes to the power of socialism, which suddenly did seem the only way.

■ ■ ■

Her pronoun, which she had never felt particularly close to, traveled farther and farther away from her in the portal, swooping through landscapes of *us* and *him* and *we* and *them*. Occasionally it flew back to light on her shoulder, like a parrot who repeated everything she said but otherwise had nothing to do with her, who in fact had been left to her by some old weird aunt, who on her deathbed had simply barked, “Deal with it!”

Mostly, though, it passed into *you, you, you, you*, until she had no idea where she ended and the rest of the crowd began.

■ ■ ■

There was an iconic photograph, crisp in its nurse’s uniform, of a woman being bent backward and kissed by a soldier on V-Day. We had seen it all our lives, and thought we understood the particular firework it captured—and now the woman had risen from history to tell everyone that she didn’t know the man at all, that in fact she had been frightened throughout the whole encounter. And only then did the hummingbird of her left hand, the uncanny twist of her spine, the grip of the soldier’s elbow on her neck become apparent. “I had never seen him before in my life,” the woman said, and there he was in the picture, there he was in our minds, clutching her like victory, never letting her go.

■ ■ ■

Of course it was always the people who called themselves enlightened who stole the most. Who picked up the slang the earliest. To show—what? That they were not like the others? That they knew what was worth stealing? They were the guiltiest too. But guilt was not worth anything.

■ ■ ■

There was a new toy. Everyone was making fun of it, but then it was said to be designed for autistic people, and then no one made fun of it anymore, but made fun of the people who were making fun of it previously. Then someone else discovered a stone version from a million years ago in some museum, and this seemed to prove something. Then the origin of the toy was revealed to have something to do with Israel and Palestine, and so everyone made a pact never to speak of it again. And all of this happened in the space of like four days.

■ ■ ■

She opened the portal. “Are we all just going to keep doing this till we die?” people were asking each other, as other days they asked each other, “Are we in hell?” Not hell, she thought, but some fluorescent room with eternally outdated magazines where they waited to enter the memory of history, paging through a copy of *Louisiana Parent* or *Horse Illustrated*.

■ ■ ■

It was in this place where we were on the verge of losing our bodies that bodies became the most important, it was in this place of the great melting that it became important whether you called it *pop* or *soda* growing up, or whether your mother cooked with garlic salt or the real chopped cloves, or whether you had actual art on your walls or posed pictures of your family sitting on logs in front of fake backdrops, or whether you had that one Tupperware stained completely orange. You were zoomed in on the grain, you were out in space, it was the brotherhood of man, and in some ways you had never been flung further from each other. You zoomed in and zoomed in on that warm grain until it looked like the coldness of the moon.

■ ■ ■

“What are you doing?” her husband asked softly, tentatively, repeating his question until she shifted her blank gaze up to him. What was she *doing*? Couldn’t he see her arms all full of the sapphires of the instant? Didn’t he realize that a male feminist had posted a picture of his *nipple* that day?

■ ■ ■

She had become famous for a post that said simply, *Can a dog be twins?* That was it. Can a dog be twins? It had recently reached the stage of penetration where teens posted the cry-face emoji at her. They were in high school. They were going to remember “Can a dog be twins?” instead of the date of the Treaty of Versailles, which, let’s face it, she didn’t know either.

■ ■ ■

This had raised her to a certain airy prominence. All around the world, she was invited to speak from what felt like a cloudbank, about the new communication, the new slipstream of information. She sat onstage next to men who were better known by their usernames and women who drew their eyebrows on so hard that they looked insane, and tried to explain why it was objectively funnier to spell it *sneazing*. This did not feel like real life, exactly, but nowadays what did?

■ ■ ■

In Australia, where she was inexplicably popular, she sat onstage under melting lights with a fellow internet expert who bore the facial satisfaction of being Canadian and whose hair was visibly gelled with \$32 gel. He spoke well and cogently on a variety of subjects, but the pants he was wearing were Cyber Pants, the sort of pants we wore back when we believed we had to skateboard through the internet. He also wore rave goggles at all times, so as to protect himself from the blinding light of cyber, which came from a sun that he carried with him, directly in his line of vision, which was the star of the future set in the old bone socket of the sky.

“*Sneazing* is funnier, right?” she asked him.

“No question,” he answered. “*Sneazing* all the way.”

■ ■ ■

During these appearances there entered into her body what she thought of as a demon of performance, an absolutely intact