

## "BATSHIT"

Say it. Say it to my face. Bat-eater, blood poacher. Carrier  
pigeon, germ-carrier, carrion breath. China virus,  
filth, peril, pestilence, yellow jacket, yellow pest.

My teeth of pangolin scales, my mouth of death. Just because  
I have a mask on, doesn't mean I can't speak.

Doesn't mean I'm scared. Do you know how fast a virus kills  
a strong, healthy racehorse? In Australia, racehorses grazed  
on grass full of bat droppings. That's how hundreds of horses dropped

dead, and their trainers died too. From bat shit. It's a shame  
how people die like their animals. How some love foreign  
dogs more than foreign people. Protesters petition against the lychee

and dog meat festival in Yulin—they call eating dog barbaric,  
but not police brutality. They hate a caged animal in a foreign  
country, but ignore the border camps in their own.

Listen, I love dogs too. Here I am, wishing I had one,  
quarantined and hog-tied to solitude. When I go outside,  
I wear sunglasses above my flu mask. It's not that I'm ashamed—

just last month, a woman was taking out the garbage  
in her tree-lined Brooklyn neighborhood, and someone  
waited to throw acid on her face, causing second-degree burns.

The difference between a monster and man's best friend  
is the difference between the lies you eat and the lies  
you refuse to accept. Like that time a man lied

to me, I started crying and he called me hysterical.

Which meant: batshit. Which meant:

Call me crazy, but bats signal good luck. In China, bats  
are a pun for blessing, good fortune. That's why emperors  
and common folk alike had all their household objects

painted with clouds and flying bats—

harbingers of another better world, these creatures living  
upside down in perfect solitude, so still they are immortal.

Stolen several times in its lifetime, an imperial famille-rose  
porcelain vase with a pattern of bats and peaches, dogs  
and lychee, sold at a Christie's auction

for twenty million. Enough to feed a village and supply  
its hospitals with N95 masks and respirators.

In Wuhan it is daybreak and the field hospitals are closing.

For months I worried about my family there, a city too far  
away to raise alarm here in my home. Come April, some batshit

people protest shelter-in-place. How worthless  
our bodies are to them, piling up in hallways and homes.

In America, bats are a portent of death. In the parks, under  
the sun, they swarm in broad daylight.

Vampire bats do not eat pollen or fruit. They have heat

sensors near their nose that smell the warmth  
of a racing heart. A single colony can drain twenty-five cows of blood.  
When you can't sleep, they hover near your pulse. Hold

your breath, turn on the lamp. Bathed in light, their wings flutter  
like heartbeats soon gone.

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SALLY WEN MAO, FROM *TOGETHER IN SUDDEN STRANGENESS*