

janan alexandra

[tell me what you know about dismemberment]

On Saturday two men came to slaughter the palm, whose exuberant pinnate leaves I had made a habit of watching each morning from my post inside the bedroom, head cocked on the pillow. My observation of the palm's swaying became a course in breathing, a crown of exemplary lungs to follow, learning like this to breathe through imitation, as with all things, absorbing this slowly. Some mornings the palm rocked gently as the final measures in a song, swing nearly imperceptible in the whisper of a breeze. Through the moody rain of winter the palm would twist & bend, limbs whipping in the great island wind, at times all foliage swept to one side like somebody's head caught in a storm, hair plastered across the face. When the sawing began on Saturday, all the birds fled. No crow to speak of. My partner said the men were only pruning the tree, as one might a grapevine or tomato plant, to encourage more growth. I raised my eyebrows but thought instead of warm sweet dates clustered by the bunch come October. By midmorning no leaf remained. Trunk thus shorn, all but a long stump left to lop. The men pushed with their might & the men heaved & strained against the once-was-tree & one held the trunk steady with his gloved hands while the other revved his saw & by two o'clock brought the whole palm down. & in its place the sky was torn, no wing in sight—no lung nor crown.