

Christine V. Lao \ IGNORANCE OF THE LAW EXCUSES NO ONE

Ignorance of the
law excuses no one

as hunger exempts nothing
that crosses its path.

A trap does not inquire
into the business of what's caught

so too a child
who does as she's told.

Where did they go, the children we were
who scurried unfettered in the dark?

In whose paths did they wander?
Whose eye it was that caught them?

Whose hand sliced these questions
from their tongues?

Now the words fall
from our honey-slick lips

to perfume the path that ignorance
means to choose.

Oh how we have grown
who legislate mousetraps

lying in wait
for the nothing

the no one
that knows no law.

In absentia

In bad faith
In consideration

In my defense
In dubio pro reo
In excelsis Deo

In extremis
In fear of
In God we trust

In kind
In light of
In loco parentis

In memory of
In nomine Patris
In omnibus

In pari delicto
In pari materia
In perpetuity

In personam
In question
In real life

In response to
In service
In status quo ante

In the end
In terrorem
In utter darkness

In vitro
In vacuo
In witness whereof

Absolute community

	PLAY	PLAY	PLAY
PLAY	act	along	as if
PLAY	boy	catch	clean
PLAY	dirty	girl	house
PLAY	it up	like a kid	joker
PLAY	on words	nice	music
PLAY	proper	quiet	repeat
PLAY	tough	safe	the fool
PLAY	with fire	up	victim
PLAY	X	Y	Z
PLAY	dead	dumb	for free

Corpus delicti¹

1 can't be tried for theft if nothing's been stolen nor arson if nothing's gone up in smoke a crime becomes fact when actually committed not even my confession secures my conviction if there's nobody missing no body to be found sounds like i'm scot-free owing no one no explanation no tax nor fee my cacophony of naysayers my relentless haters & their unrelenting screed they whom i must absolutely pay no heed lest i end up crossing the road like a headless chicken before it gives up the ghost in rush hour traffic time to get dressed for the banquet except instead of black tie and coattails it's a vat of boiling water that loosens up these feathers now so easy to pluck & why now i'm naked as the day i was born & vulnerable shorn of all my plumery who am i really but a body before consumption a carcass after supper say *yes i've always wanted to be served*

Declarations

1.

Wives will pick worms from pots of garden roses, married
to their duty. I've been meaning to forbear.

Wounds flower in my palms. I shall wear the scent of papaya blooms
for the rest of my life. What union this shall be made plain.

2.

I've been willing unto meekness. I will wipe your feet
with my hair until I am pure. I want to wear you down

to your most animal, to sediment, mineral,
in bed, my intelligence, my shapeshifting body, you

shall be the miracle I pay for, dearly, beloved,
I will pray for giving that costs nothing, labor till you

pay me no rest, you, my reward, my holy knowing,
I will do yes I do I will do what you will

3.

Meanwhile my soul wrinkles
its nose at devotion, how it indulges,

casts away this fantasy production.
Daily I declare my allegiance to civility

with the sensible shoes that I wear
my unadorned hair, swept back in a neat

ponytail. Love's uniform is duty. You can't
stand me otherwise, checking out early

before I put a word in, getting off on avoidance
of sin. If only you looked

beyond the modesty of my eyes,
you'd find a proclivity for ruin.

If I knew better, I'd say you loved a nun
in your heart, called me Sister.

You know I'd only been willing
to be blind.

4.

well I like how you hang
and how when I tease
too near for comfort
unbutton me lord
forgive us our trespasses
dear prospector
I own what
your hands
are working to fruition
the impossible
thought now unthought now undo me
undone when we're done there is nothing
to declare