

Susan Musgrave / THE IMPSTONE

(for Roy & Daphne)

i

The day the man
stumbled and
cursed the stone's
existence

the stone created
woman
out of another stone.

Darkness fell
like a thick velvet
curtain over the
land. The stone saw
that it was good.

And on the seventh day
he rested.

ii

This stone
was put here
for you to
trip over.

It has more value
than money
it has more power
than God.

Its first language is
dying,
its second,
survival.

This stone is neither
a man nor a
woman.

It was put here
for you to
trip over.

iii

This stone has been
rained on
this stone has been
left out in the
dark.

This stone has been
stepped on
though it never hurt
anyone.

Pick up the stone —
you will notice these
scars.

Drop it again
it won't blame you.

iv

This stone
is the guilt
each person takes
upon him

this stone
is a
mass-murderer,
a poet,
a god.

This stone is a
growth, a
failure, a
government.

This stone
stands for
nothing —
it has
no country.

v

This stone
was an island
once —
tourists would take
picnics to its
beaches,
fishermen would take
shelter in its
coves.

The stone knew
what it felt like
to be sinking.
Some people
changed the
island's name
in memory of a
dead politician.

vi

In your house
nobody mentions
this stone.
It is asleep
beside the fireplace
it is dreaming
of warmth.

Nobody mentions it
because they are
frightened.
Nobody feels it
because they are
cold.

One night
it changes
into an apparition.

Nobody knows why.

Your house trembles
like an animal dying.
It sees its reflection
for the first time.

vii

This stone
knows what it's like
to be chipped away
into nothing

to be blown up
into pieces
to make roads for people
to walk down
complaining all the
way.

This stone should have been
a writer
knowing the truth's disguised
as a bulldozer or a
typewriter

knowing the devil is
always present
wearing a
white carnation

being sucked like a
cigar

until he succeeds.

viii

This stone is
everybody's
culture hero.
He has been made to
explain his dream
once too often.

His dream
is the same scene
over and over.
He is standing with a
loaded gun in his
mouth
trying to explain
his feelings.

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Port Clements