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Last Rites

Chain Shields
University of the Pacific

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Last Rites

Chain Shields

I.

In the Wari' tribe, they used to eat their dead.

We learned all about it.

They'd strike up a mourning wail,

sing their grieving while they

burnt down every thing the dead

kin owned, sweep away the ashes,

and reroute all the streets and doors like

the gone had never been there at all.

And they'd consume them.

We learned that the families would

cry and beg,

would plead for their friends and

loved ones to taste the flesh on their lips,

would weep for wanting it, to honor

the dead by taking the corpse in,

absorbed into one's own body until

nothing was left to rot in polluting

earth any longer.

It was cruel to leave anything behind,
cruel to those who would remember,
cruel to those who would be missed.
You were holding them back from moving on.
There was no greater disrespect.

II.

There is a corpse behind me that
I don't want buried.
I want it eaten like the Wari' did,

I want the bones to crunch and
be drained of marrow, shattered into dust,
I want the skin and fat to be chewed
down to dinner crumbs:
don't leave a single eyelash, don't leave
a single hair.
Build me no coffin, mark me no gravestone.
Since I ended once, let there be no trace of me for ever.
Empty the family albums, take a lighter to
the photographs.

I don't miss me. I have already replaced myself.

The best kind of love I can show for my shadow is to
rid it of the corpse it
drags along.

The dead wants this, too.

No one wants to be a zombie, to be cursed a ghost.

Let all that no longer lives disappear from the lives of
the living—then the new life, the next life,
can keep walking.