



# Calliope

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# Calliope

SPECIAL ISSUE: *COLORS*

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Submissions of poetry and short fiction are welcomed from August 15-October 15 for the December issue, and from January 15-March 15 for the May issue. Issues are thematic and the May 1986 issue will deal with *Food*. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No simultaneous submissions, please.

Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name masked so that beginning and established writers are read without prejudice.

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Lenore Balliro

MORNING IN THE CITY, 1944  
after Edward Hopper

Someone is gone, and someone stays. The bed is ruffled, there's a faint smell of oil on one of the pillows. Almond? Something exotic and lingering. An unformed question, vague rings of smoke that evaporate into the atmosphere. The one who is left lies there, reaches out her hand. It comes back empty. Only faint forms on the soft sheets, stark white. Above her head stains spread, a liquid history. This is not her room, or the room of the one who wears the almond oil. It's a neutral room, a room a painter controls, rigid edges of light. Don't let it fool you. It's late, the one who is left waits for light by the window, shielding her pink breasts with a rough white towel. Somewhere on the towel there's the name of something, a hotel. But we don't see it. Outside the window brown buildings rise. Soft knocks in the hallway, the unlocking of locks. Morning spreads violet, like shame.

*Lenore Balliro*

COMPARTMENT C, CAR 293, 1938  
after Edward Hopper

The greens crowd her in, over to one side of the vinyl seat, away from the window. Who wants to watch the landscape flatten, anyway, monitor the rise and decline of horizon like an EKG screen? She's seen it before, through Kansas it really flattens out, hopelessly horizontal. So she unfolds the schedule: train times. Dots, arrows, stars, digits. Lines break from dotted to solid, curve around columns. She keeps reading, stares at the map that tracks the country, pulls taut from coast to coast. Anything to escape the greens of the compartment--all wrong. Green seat, wall, carpet. Frog green, salamander green, Nile green, the color of scum that settles on the surface of ponds or coats small stones under water. Slippery. Smelling vaguely marine. The day before she boarded the train she walked through a graveyard--a New England cemetery so big the streets had their own names: Old Road, River Road. A river bordered it, she watched minnows rush to the edge in clusters. The way the sun hit, all the greens took different hues: viridian, jade, celadon. The green under her feet, for instance, was not the same as the bright green where the sun shone directly on the grassy knoll--a juicy green, a stinging smell. Each place the ground dipped and lifted and levelled out was a different shade of green. The shadow of one stone cut sharp into the curve of the earth and she watched it move standing still. She watched how the sun shifted and the greens turned, and she looked at the palms of her hands, then back to the greens edging the graveyard, how they started to darken,

Lenore Balliro/Compartment C

without warning. The spaces between the trees enlarged, and took the place of leaves, turning black. She had to get out of there, fast.

\*\*\*



Armand Brint

"NIGHT FISHING AT ANTIBES"

(Pablo Picasso)

Four prongs  
Divilishly suspended a  
Hair's breath from  
Flesh which is not flesh but  
Scales which are  
Not

It is the fish a  
Square of beige & green  
Serious and  
Unkillable

The fisher-boy too  
Preoccupied to know he  
Could not kill what  
He could not see

He might see a  
Fish but

It is not and  
It is true night

A girl-woman  
Waits for the kill  
She has a blue  
Tongue

She stands tiptoe on the  
Pier an arm's length from the boat  
But the boat is isolated completely  
out at sea which

Is not the sea  
But a green luminous film that  
Must be punctured  
The moon is a pinwheel that  
Sends sparks at a shadow woman's

Armand Brint/"Night Fishing at Antibes"

Womb it is  
An eye that gives the  
Boy courage  
The boy who is not  
Alone his companion is  
Half beast peers into the  
deep expecting death  
To leap out like a fish  
Something is about to happen  
The girl-woman balances her  
Bicycle on one  
Wheel things flee in  
All directions  
Except the fish and the  
Boy who is not  
Allowed to kill

Margot Duxler

BRIGHT COLORS

She fooled me. She's supposed to live forever--crying long distance if I forget Mother's Day. Reminding me of who I'm supposed to be. The door to her room is partly open. Light from the corridor cuts a narrow triangle across the beige carpet. An orderly rumbles past me pushing a cart of empty dinner trays. I lean against the door jamb, listening. There is no sound. I can't even hear her breathe. She used to tell a story--about coming home from school on the streetcar. You can't imagine, she said. Rush hour. The streetcar packed so full you couldn't see out the window to count the stops. I was sucking a jaw breaker. I used to buy them with my milk money. So the streetcar stops--plonk. Just like that. Like someone hit you in the stomach, it's so sudden. And the candy get's stuck in my windpipe. I couldn't breathe. Not at all. Her hand automatically touched the indentation at the base of her neck.

So I start coughing, you know, to jar it loose. But it's still stuck. So I cough harder. Then I notice that people are staring at me. Like I'm being rude, coughing without a handkerchief. I was so embarrassed. In my dress with the pinned up hem, making a fuss like that with all those people. Honestly, if the lady next to me hadn't noticed and pounded me on the back, I would have died. You never would have been born. Your grandmother said it served me right for spending my milk money on chazerey.

I push open the door. She is asleep, tethered by the wrist to a machine with a blinking red light. Clear liquid drips into her veins. She breathes silently, her chest rising and falling. I don't remember ever watching her sleep before. I sit down in a thick upholstered chair next to the head

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

of the bed. Her face is pale, bluish under the fluorescent light. She is hollow under her cheek bones, her perfect nose seems longer, thinner. I touch her hand. When my father died, all she said for days was: his hands were so cold. His hands were so cold. I cover her hands with mine and close my eyes.

\*\*\*

She is looking at me when I wake up. Mama. I lean over the bed, kiss her on the forehead. She is wearing a short sleeved silk nightgown from home. She put on lipstick, rouge, combed her hair.

You were sleeping when I came in, I say.

You were sleeping when I woke up.

It was a long flight. And besides, you're terrible company when you're lying around snoring.

No, I wasn't snoring, was I?

Just a little, I say.

We look at each other for several long seconds. Her eyes become filmy, luminous. She blinks, regains control. Deborah, she says. Oh, Deborah.

Why didn't you call me sooner? I ask.

She sighs, the air whistles through her nose. I didn't want to worry you.

The anger rises, familiar, tightening the muscles in the backs of my legs. Every Sunday in our coast-to-coast call, all she tells me are things meant to make me worry: Mrs. Zimmerman got mugged right outside the building. Some crazy-man set women's panties on fire in the laundry room. Can you believe it? she says.

I hear her fingers drumming the counter clear across the country.

Panties. Who would do such a thing? If Mr. Vogel hadn't checked to see if his towels were dry, your nother would be barbecued chicken.

I wait until the flush of anger passes. You

*Margot Duxler/Bright Colors*

should have called as soon as you knew, Mama.  
So, she says. If you came sooner you could have stopped it from spreading? You're here now. That's all that matters.

I'm here now. Look, I say. I have something for you. I take a jar of home-made plum jam out of my carryall. The light shining through the cut class turns it amber.

Thank you, Honey. She rolls the jar in her hands, looks up at me. You can make a living selling jelly? she asks.

Of course, I lie. And the music too. The band has been doing really well. We're playing all over. People are crazy to hear us. I'm so glad you made me take flute lessons when I was a kid. I don't think I ever told you that, did I? I really mean it....I listen to my voice blabbering but I can't seem to shut up.

Maybe you'll be famous some day, she says.

I hope so.

Like Knott's Berry Farm.

There is a long silence. I watch the light blink on the I.V. unit.

Maybe you'll go back to school.

I take a deep breath. Tap my toes on the rug. Maybe, Mama.

Listen to me. You should finish. You have so much potential. Why are you wasting it on jelly?

And music! My voice rises. I like jelly and music, goddamn it!

Don't curse, she says. I can't talk to you when you curse like that.

\*\*\*

I wander through the crowded rooms at her apartment. When she sold the house, I thought she was

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

going to sell most of the furniture too. But she kept it. All of it. Even the king-sized bed she has slept in alone since my father died. The rose-wood breakfront looks stooped. The rosette on top grazes the ceiling. The thick carpet under it has been cut away to fit it into the room. Still, the pile in front is so deep the bottom drawer won't open. I run my finger over the beveled glass of the door. It cuts my reflection in two so the halves of my face are mismatched. My grandmother's Passover plates, gold trimmed with tiny violets at the border sit in neat rows on the middle shelf. Above them is a family of birds I made in the fifth grade: a mama, papa, and baby. Lumpy blue and white bodies with yellow beaks. Without looking, I know that they are signed "Debbie" underneath. The "i" has a heart over it instead of a dot.

I drift into the bedroom, pull the quilt off the bed. The sheets brush the backs of my hands, cool and soft. I curl into my mother's bentwood rocker, pull the covers over my lap, my shoulders. The chair sang under my mother's small frame as she read, knitted. I tuck the covers in around me, lean forward, back, forward again, trying to rock, but the chair is wedged between two tables, immobilized, its runners resting against the baseboard. I remember rocking slowly back and forth, looking at my new nose in a hand mirror. The skin around my eyes is dark plum, yellowing at the borders. Bright spots of blood float in the whites of my eyes.

Well? Mother adjusts her belt so the two interlocking "G's" of the designer's initials face straight ahead.

I hate it, I say.

Don't be silly. It's beautiful. He did a wonderful job.

I set the mirror on the table beside me. Next to

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

it, travel brochures on France, a guide to walking tours of Paris, and a catalogue for the Summer of Music at the University of Lyon, fan out across the table.

You promised I could go, I say.

We never promised, she says.

It was a deal: I fix my nose, I get to go. You tricked me.

That's not true.

It is, I yell.

You should be grateful. You wanted to keep that onion bulb nose you got from your father?

I wanted to go to Europe!

We're silent, staring past each other.

Admit it, I say. That's all I want...now. Admit that you lied.

There are reasons, she says.

So you did lie, I snap.

You're too young to be traipsing off on your own. You're not ready.

I'm eighteen, for God's sake!

See how you're carrying on. This is mature behavior?

I begin to cry.

Honey....she touches my arm.

I jerk away. I hate you. You tricked me. You don't give a damn about me. You don't care at all about what I want!

I want what's best for you....she touches my arm again.

Get out of here! I grab the mirror, hold it poised above my head.

Honey...

Now!

She closes the door behind her. I let the mirror fly. It hits the wall, scratching paint and falls face up, unbroken on the floor.

\*\*\*

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

The back of the bed is angled and she sits straight.

Look, Deborah, she says.

At first I can't tell if she's referring to Dan Rather, who looks down on us from the tv bolted to a bracket high on the wall, or to the nest of bright orange yarn in her lap. The knitting needles click in her hands. She seems to be able to count the stitches by feel as she watches tv.

It's a sweater, she says, answering the question I'm about to ask. For you.

I look at the yarn she is busily working. It's the most horrible color I've ever seen. The color highway workers wear. For a long time I don't see anything.

You don't like it? she asks, the needles still in her hands.

It's an incredible color, I say. So bright. I smile.

Yes, she says. Bright colors look nice on you. They're happy. Bright colors are happy.

The nurse comes in. How are we doing, Mrs. Silverman?

This is my daughter, Deborah, Mama says. From Oregon.

The nurse is fat. When she smiles, three chins form below her red mouth. So how do you like New York? she asks.

I was brought up here, I say.

She nods and takes a fresh nightgown from the dresser.

Mama picks up the remote control unit beside her, pushes a button and Dan Rather disappears from the screen.

The nurse is gentle, moves slowly as she slips the sleeve down my mother's arm and over the I.V. tube which she has unhooked from the machine. Mama



Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

turns her face away from me. My eyes lock on her torso--a bandage covers her chest from where the left breast used to be, to below her rib cage.

The nurse sees me staring. She smiles at me. A sad smile. I look hard at the blank TV to keep from crying. The skin clings to my mother's ribs, emphasizing the curve of the bones, reminding me of the fine small frame of a greyhound. When she is dressed again, the nurse attaches the I.V., adds some medication to the bag on top, which turns the liquid a bilious pink.

Mama flicks the television back on. Dan Rather's face materializes.

I don't like him to see me without clothes on, she says.

I make a show of laughing at her joke.

She picks up her knitting. Her face is stern. Haven't I taught you anything? You can't go through life undressing in front of strange men.

I look at her hard. She's not joking. I feel like I've got bubbles under my skin.

But, Mama. It's a tv. He can't see in here.

What do you know about it, she says. You've always been too easy and that's the truth.

Mama, what are you talking about?

You know.

No. I do not know. I pause. Mama, what's wrong with you?

With me? With you. Those men. Always some man there answering the phone.

Mama, that's Alan.

Alan, Barry, David. In my day we didn't take our clothes off so easily. When I was growing up, if you wanted to take your clothes off, you got married first.

She is looking at me as she speaks,

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

straight into my eyes. But she talks to a fifteen year old girl, caught in the back seat with her boyfriend, her angora sweater bunched into a ball beneath her.

I stand, pick up my coat and purse. I try to choke the words behind my tongue. The anger, too familiar, creeps up the tendons in my legs. At least I didn't have to get married, I say.

She opens her mouth to answer, concentrating hard, then yawns. She looks at me, looks away, picks up her knitting and begins to count stitches.

\*\*\*

I walk the hospital corridor with long strides, keeping pace with Dr. Abrams. It took me two hours to find him, and I'm not letting him go without an answer.

So why does a perfectly lucid fifty-eight year old woman suddenly think people can look at her through the television, I want to know.

Dr. Abrams stops so quickly I walk right past him and have to turn around. Is that so? he says.

I tried to tell you on the phone.

He crosses his arms in front of him, rubs his chin. His bald head shines under the lights. The deep pockets beneath his eyes are filled with grey. He puts a hand on my shoulder and suddenly I feel sorry for him. He clears his throat.

It's the lithium, he says. Sometimes people have hallucinations, disassociations when they've been on it for a prolonged period. And in combination with other drugs, it's very

*Margot Duxler/Bright Colors*

common.

But it's been working, hasn't it? For the mood swings? She seems much better since she's been taking it.

Yes. She's been doing amazingly well. Until this problem with the malignancy.

He looks at his watch, begins crab-stepping.

I thought she was going crazy, I say.

Oh, no. Nothing like that. It's just a drug reaction. We'll monitor it closely. He pats my arm and walks off down the hall.

I check on her before I leave. She's fallen asleep with the sweater on her lap, the TV tuned to an adventure movie. I put the knitting in its bag, turn off the TV, the overhead light. I stare at this woman, my mother, memorizing her features in the dark.

\*\*\*

Snow begins falling as I drive to the apartment. It fills the beams of light from approaching cars with silver. The first boy I ever kissed played trumpet in the school band. We stood in the stairwell after rehearsal, my flute case on top of his trumpet case on the deep ledge in front of the window. It was already dark outside. A fine light snow fell, windless, haloes around the street lamps. We stood close together, the arms of our bulky pea-coats touching, searing my skin through an undershirt and three sweaters. Around his neck, he wore a long wool scarf, fringed on the ends. He looked at me, looped the scarf across my back, keeping an end in each hand. He wound the ends around his wrists until I could feel his breath, spearmint, hot against my face.

Mama, Mother, he kissed me, I kissed Bill Bradley. On the lips, I said, wet shoes dripping on the kitchen floor. I watched a snowflake melt

Margot Duxler/Bright Colors

on my sleeve.

My mother paused, the tomato she was slicing, dropping seeds on the cutting board. You just be careful who you give your kisses to, she said.

I'll sure be more careful who I tell, I said. I ignored her as she called my name. I climbed the stairs two at a time, and slammed my bedroom door behind me.

\*\*\*

There is a shopping list on the refrigerator held there with a magnet that looks like a poppy-seed bagel:

milk

matzos

rye

hamburger

chicken

jelly

bridgemix

I stare at the list. When I see my mother's handwriting, I can hear her voice. I go into the bedroom, wrap the quilt around me, but still, I'm cold. I open the closet, press my face into her blouses. They smell like her--hot baths and perfume, toast and honey. I pull the door shut. When I was three, I dropped a porcelain figurine: a balloon lady in a bonnet and full skirt. The light glinted off the shinning balloons--red, blue, yellow, orange--friendly, smiling eyes, beckoning. Mama tried to glue the statuette back together, but pieces of it had slivered into dust; the glue wouldn't hold. I knew my father was going to spank me. I hid in Mama's closet, backed flat against the wall behind the silent garments, waiting.

Where is she? I heard my father's voice.

*Margot Duxler/Bright Colors*

It was an accident, Mama said.

I shivered between the heavy wool coats. Doors opened and closed, floor boards creaked. My father circled the house, hunting. I hugged a coat around me, disappearing in my mother's scent.

\*\*\*

Her hair is beginning to fall out. I can see her scalp through the carefully arranged blond waves. I turn my gaze, afraid she'll send me away, like the people on TV, looking at what they're not supposed to see. The orange yarn glares from her lap. The TV is on, a quiet mumble.

How's the sweater coming? I ask.

Nearly finished. Just one more sleeve and I can begin to sew it together.

Shall I start it? I ask. Maybe you could show me? Would you?

The needles stop clicking. She pats the bed beside her. I turn off the TV, then sit next to her, our shoulders touching. But we don't begin on the sweater. Instead, we hold hands, mine on top of hers, our fingers interwoven. We sit there just like that until the room is so dark we can barely see the bright orange yarn spread across our laps.

\*\*\*\*\*



Mary-Lou Erpenbeck

PORTRAITS IN BROWN

Perhaps it was the color brown  
that made Dad so staid.  
His eyes reflecting in the varnish  
as he finished a hand made chair,  
brown in brown  
deep and patient  
rubbing the wood until it shone  
soft and warm as fur.  
The color lived with him;  
the color of his skin in summer  
baked smooth in the sun  
so that he always looked hot  
even in shorts.  
Earth skin,  
skin of mud and bark.  
Once I drew a picture of him  
in brown wax crayon  
and highlighted it  
with mahogany, sepai, and tan  
And he smiled at my work  
and put it in his desk.  
A brown desk  
that smelled like pine.  
His soft color  
even filled Christmas;  
dimming the tinsel and lights  
with a single request:  
"Be a good girl,  
and polish Daddy's shoes."  
But I was not a good girl.  
Fairskinned,  
I was a bother to take in the sun;  
Too young to master  
the calmness of wood;

Mary-Lou Erpenbeck/Portraits in Brown

Too quick to startle;  
Too soon to cry.  
I could only wonder at this man  
so easy with change  
standing steady from season to season.  
And sinking the rag  
into soft brown polish,  
I rubbed and buffed  
until those shoes shone  
reflecting me brown  
in warm leather musk;  
Staining my hands,  
Painting me--  
the likeness  
of my father's daughter.



Mary-Lou Erpenbeck

PURPLE FANTASY

Today I will dress in purple  
and I will be ready for anything.  
I have seen the purple feathers  
hiding in a mallard duck's wings,  
and will expect purple angels  
and purple unicorns  
to arrive at any moment.

And I will be rich,  
wrapped in a purple plush cape.  
A queen dazzling in silk.  
A purple jewel.

And purple will make me wild  
free to dance on sidewalks.  
Performing feats of daring:  
unicylces  
stilts  
and traveling over tall bridges  
in a tiny car.

And maybe I will fall in purple love  
And I will sleep in purple sheets  
and have purple dreams--  
soul-to-soul dreams  
in which people will whisper  
"Beautiful,"  
and rush out to buy  
their own purple clothes.

Julie Cooper-Fratrik

THE FIRST OF TWO PARAGRAPHS  
IN STRICT IMITATION  
OF WILLIAM GASS

I

For we're always out of touch here. That's just how  
it is--for example, in the evenings. The walls of  
the corridors, the ceilings, the faces of the nurses  
are  
Windows, walkways, faceless figures--they are  
Words are  
and the voice where it falters. Every silence and  
shadow, each innuendo is  
Arms, sex, night, fathers' hands and children's whisp-  
ers, nails, lashes, morning and small cries--they're  
quite  
Fires are  
Sparks, flames, ashes, cinders, eyes are  
Brothers, sisters, mothers, men killed in absentia,  
dreams in the same way, morning, lamps, love, all are  
everything is  
and everyone is out of touch who comes here.

dark.  
dark.  
dark,  
dark.  
dark.  
dark,  
dark.  
dark.  
dark,  
dark,

*William Freedman*

PHOENIX OF SURFACES

The sun at five o'clock  
is a phoenix half the world,  
the clouds its dark wings hunched,  
bright rays its fantail  
to the other side of sea.

Half raven, half peacock,  
wings scatter the ashes  
of a great cremation.  
Someone who does not believe  
in body, who believes in starlight  
but not stars has been returned.  
Tomorrow tiny feathers  
will fly from all directions,  
bright to the reconstruction  
of dark wings. The white head  
droops, the copper tail flattens.  
Someone who believes in power,  
in the softening dignity of withdrawal  
bows. The sword of light,  
once the full width of water,  
rises from a depth  
that is only what we see,  
the profundity of surface  
where the meanings are.

The orange eye, open to the end,  
drops where it disappears.

John Gilgun

BLACK

Black is for interiors, the proximal, the womb:  
Black earth spewing and curling on the lip of the  
plow;  
Black ash, kettle, tripod, pot;  
The cricket's intricate body, that black, the inner  
lives of ants;  
Patent leather, its sheen, the satin blackness  
of plums;  
Calligraphic strokes, white paper, black ink;  
Baudelaire in the daguerreotype, his black tie,  
his frown;  
All negations, all denials, the blackness of No;  
Creosote, coal mines, slag;  
Black walnut, black widow, black magic, black death;  
Cosmic black:  
The Universe collecting itself  
Before the birth of light.

Markham Johnson

DEPARTURES

I am leaving again as the sun  
heaves its color over the edge  
of another's world: rose descending  
to yellow, to the unthinkable green  
of the stewardess's eye-shadow, blue,  
then violet hanging back, like forgiveness.  
I no longer know what there is to forgive.

Below, pastures of clouds, moon faced,  
like children with nothing on their minds.  
Tonight you will wrestle your nakedness  
into a newly emptied bed, too large  
to comfortably carry you through the halls  
of sleep after days, like this,  
brushing your hand back and forth  
on smudged glass of another airline's terminal.

I am leaving you this way:  
after the long slow walk we take together  
when our words finally shrug off  
the embarrassed silences, dark doorways  
of sorrow we have learned to enter  
with just a little fear.

Margo LaGattuta

PAINTING FACES

*Make me a rainbow, they say.*  
Each one lifts his face high  
trusts it in the palm of my hand.  
*And I want stars around my eyes.*

There is no stillness like a child  
who holds her face so still  
she feels the dance of clowns  
circling her nose in red paint.

I have all the power of blue  
in my right hand. I can  
color in tears, make a face  
of sad flowers on a stem.

I can make it rain  
until the sun comes out  
on this cheek or that.  
Draw a garden of lips.

*Color me a camouflage face,*  
one green-eyed boy asks.  
And I make him disappear  
in a jungle of olive and brown.

He looks in a mirror  
to face the inside forest.  
Sade in the color of old leaves  
he goes hiding.

*Margo LaGattuta/Painting Faces*

Painting faces is an odd  
old task. They come  
to me and I make them  
go away fast.

Children want me to do it.  
Erase me, they say.  
Color me in wild;  
I want to scare you.

Lisa Lepovetsky

SUMMER HEAT

Dark woman with a sunflower  
prone in a turquoise boat  
sails like music over the water.  
Ripples reflected in eyes of amber  
on a calypso afternoon,  
she draws one long chocolate finger  
slowly across an inferno  
of printed page.

Summer oozes over her  
moist mauve mouth  
silently chanting paperback prayers,  
drips over filaments of down  
on oiled brown arms  
before disappearing unnoticed  
into a sea of shadows  
between smooth mahogany legs.



Deena Linett

LINES FOR A PAINTER

*I will show you fear  
in a handful of dust.*

Or if not fear, desire,  
which mirrors it.  
I tried to gather its elusive particles  
for you, but it wavers and won't stay,  
like light, the only possible subject.  
Instead: the slant of a salt wind  
and the flare of the poppies I planted.  
Their open mouths echo fresh grief.  
I wish you could see  
how their pure cup shapes  
repeat the enclosure  
of my hands on your face,  
how the little green stamens assert themselves,  
how the pistils flourish  
like miniature explosions,  
how from each center  
the hot cry blooms like blood,  
how they reflect exactly  
one goldwhite sunset  
brought all the way from California  
to this barren eastern coast.

Deena Linett

THE NEED FOR WATER

Not blue mountain lakes  
lucid and circular, and not rivers.  
The gray chop  
off San Francisco,  
green pouring into blue  
at the Capes, the shock  
rearranging geography;  
thrust and wash against Pacific rock,  
shuddering kelp,  
water splitting light  
into countless sharpened pieces,  
the hard pull of no land for three thousand miles.  
The perilous blue pulling us outward and we, going.

*Therese Mattil*

ARTHRITIC MARRIAGE

Make love to me. My body hurries past me  
to its grave, these bones like chipped white  
coffee cups. While these sheets are smooth  
and cool, and while my knees carve bowls  
into the worn linen, you might smooth  
my terror. Your lips can erase

the word that stumbled from the doctor's  
mouth. A bone white bridal shroud hangs  
before me like the future and suddenly  
everything is stairs. I climb into white  
silk and float up to you, always at the top.  
Make love to me. I'll leave my bones

at the foot of the bed, albino pets.  
There's so little time. Morning aches  
to stretch its white arms  
into this misty courtship. Make love to me.  
The ceremony waits, our guests  
sipping tea from fine bone china.

Lynn K. Thorsen

GLORY

Rutey stepped calmly across the small puddle and then directly into it. Mrs. Rosemary had left her sprinkler on for hours and the rivulet running down the cracks in the driveway had made puddles in every depression in the sidewalk. Rutey emptied the puddles by splashing in them. It was an endless preoccupation; the puddles would fill almost as soon as he'd finished the final splash.

When Mrs. Rosemary stepped out into her front yard, waved to Rutey and then turned off the sprinkler, the rivulet ran dry and the puddles were over. Rutey took off his soggy tennis shoes and muddied socks. He put them on the front porch. It was getting close to lunch time. He waited patiently by the clump of snap dragons, opening and closing their small jaws with a pinch of his finger.

"Rutey, come in and eat!"

His mother yelled from the front door. She yelled out across the lawn and the sidewalk, even though he was standing very close to the front porch, and clearly in sight. "Lunch time!" He picked up his shoes and socks and walked in.

"How many times do I have to tell you not to play in water?" His mother grabbed his upper arm in a firm grip and yanked at his shoes and socks. "Go take off those wet clothes, right this minute." Rutey glanced down at his tee shirt and levis. They were a bit soggy, but didn't appear to be really wet.

Before he'd climbed out of bed that morning, he had known that the day would be clear and warm and that the afternoon would be a perfect time for the meadow. So, after lunch, he headed directly out the back door.

The meadow was under a fence and through a

Lynn K. Thorsen/Glory

small pasture that had never held farm stock, but made a good home for field mice that were terrorized by a den of lanky cats. Rutey climbed the fence on the opposite side of the pasture and ran down the ravine and up the other side. He could already hear the brilliant, clear calls of the meadowlarks and the coarse squawks of the bigger jays.

The meadow was perfectly enclosed. The pasture backed it on one side and the high brush that hemmed the thin forest fenced it nicely on the other three. This gave it a tight, safe feeling.

He flung himself down on the first soft heap he came to and peered down at the dark, grass-thatched earth below his chin. It was busy. Tiny brown ants crawled through the maze of short grass and curling shoots. Even smaller spiders ran crazily up the grass stocks only to turn and go back down again. A slow, lethargic potato bug endlessly turned up small clods of dirt. Rutey flicked at an ant that clutched a waving tip of grass. The ant clung on tenaciously, so Rutey left him alone.

He rolled over on his back, feeling the coarse grass prick through his tee-shirt. He stared at the sun until it was a bright orange dot wherever he looked and he inhaled the smell of the warm meadow. His bare arms tingled from the cool winds that swirled down through the thin forest trees.

Rutey suddenly wondered how many ants were trapped in the grass beneath him; how many were caught or mashed when he rolled over. The more he thought about the ants, the more uncomfortable he became, so he finally stood up. He moved carefully off the soft mound and towards the forest trees.

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The heavy bushes that edged the forest tangled up against him as he pushed through to the trees. The small groves condensed into a solid mass as the forest moved back from the meadow.

There were scattered deer paths that led clearly into the thick trees. Rutey set off at a run for the forest.

He jogged down the narrow path and was well into the trees when he saw something to the side of the path ahead of him. There was a shoe sticking out from under a low bush just off the edge of the trail. It was a heavy, brown leather shoe, the kind a lumberjack or a hunter might wear in the forest. The shoe rested on its heel with the toe pointing straight up. Rutey stared down at the shoe. He bent down and peered under the bush. There was a body hidden beneath the tangled overhang of branches and leaves.

Rutey watched the lower part of the body intently, ready to run or step back when it started to move. He saw brown trousers and white socks, and the fringe of a red plaid shirt.

When some time had passed, the focus of his eye's shifted and he saw a steady stream of ants marching directly under the body, under the lower back. After a while, his legs started to cramp from the crouch and he sat back on the dirt path, waiting for something to happen.

When nothing did, he reached out with his foot and casually kicked at the shoe. It was like kicking solid rock.

Rutey pushed himself up and walked around to the far side of the bush. The body was invisible under the thick growth. He lifted up a

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mass of leaves and branches, pushing them back until he could see the curly grey hair and part of a neck. The face was turned away from him. There was no sudden realization that the man was dead. It was as if Rutey had discovered that the man was wearing a neck scarf, or a strange hat. Rutey let the branches drop back into place.

He didn't know exactly how he felt or what he should do. He walked slowly around in a small circle on the path, scuffing his feet against the dirt. He nudged the shoe again, and then started back down the path towards the meadow.

"Don't let the screen door slam." His mother was ironing in the kitchen. He dragged his fingers along the top of the kitchen counter as he walked over to the ironing board.

"There's a dead man in the forest."

"Have you been over to McCulland's again? I told you not to go over there. Here, put these in your room." She handed him a stack of folded underwear and his pressed Sunday shirt.

He walked slowly up the stairs to his bedroom and put the underwear in his drawer. The afternoon breeze blew through window, flapping the curtains and rustling a stack of drawing paper on his table. He stared out the window for a minute, looking out across the pasture and then went back downstairs.

His mother was still ironing.

"There's a dead cat in the pasture."

"Well, don't go near it. It's probably one of those ugly old cats that the McCulland's feed. They're dirty animals, don't you touch

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it. And don't go in the pasture. I swear, I can talk until I'm blue in the face." She slammed the iron down against the board and pressed the shirt furiously.

Rutey thought about the body during dinner and wondered if the man had been hungry when he died.

"Finish your meat, Rutey." His father reached for the potatoes.

"Rutey was over at McCulland's today. I've told him and told him not to go over there." His mother looked mournfully down at her plate. "That boy doesn't mind me at all, Robert."

"Rutey, you mind your mother."

"There's a dead man in the forest."

"And don't go telling stories. There's nothing worse than a lie, Rutey. Nothing." His father was a large man, who ate vigorously and enjoyed his food.

That night Rutey dreamt about the shoe. In his dreams, the shoe was much larger and not attached to a body.

The morning was cloudy. Rutey lay in bed and stared out the window. He was worried about the day. Usually as soon as he woke up in the morning, he could see the day ahead of him and he ran eagerly towards it. Today felt as thick as the clouds; there was no way to see into it. He climbed out of bed, washed, and started to dress. As he pulled on his tee-shirt, he had a very odd feeling. It was like he was putting on someone else's clothes. He held the shirt out away from his chest. His levis felt strange and his whole body itched when he walked down the stairs to breakfast.



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"Finish your cereal, and don't play with your milk." His mother was dressed in a pretty cotton shift and her lips were a shiny red. "I'm going out for the morning, Rutey. Mrs. Rosemary will watch for you, and she'll give you lunch. I told her you'd be over at 12:00." She looked at him sternly. "Please be there so she doesn't have to call for you. And don't go to McCulland's."

Rutey was across the meadow and on the path through the thin forest before his mother had locked the front door and dropped the keys into her patent leather hand bag.

The forest was chilly and filled with damp shadows. The cuffs on Rutey's levis were wet when he reached the shoe that still pointed to the sky. He wasn't sure what he was going to do.

He sat down on the path, the thin layer of mud sliding beneath him. His own foot was resting close enough to the shoe that he could touch it if he stretched his toes. So he stretched his toes and nudged it slightly and then didn't pull his foot away. He stared at the shoe, at the worn, thick black tread and at the curl of one leather shoelace that drooped over the top of the tongue.

There was no concern that the body would move today; he pushed himself closer to the end of the bush and bent his head down until he could see underneath it. The curled fingers of a pale hand reached out towards him from the bulk of the body.

Rutey held his breath for the first minute that he looked at the hand. He was close enough to it that he could see the grime beneath the white fingernails. The

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palm of the hand was turned up, wide, flat and vulnerable.

He stared at the hand, trying to understand what it was doing there. It was different than the shoe. The shoe looked like it belonged in the forest; it was strong and hard and brown. The pale hand looked vulnerable and awkwardly out of place in the thin forest under a bush. Rutey lay back in the slippery mud on the path.

Birds fought over something in the high branches that arched over the path. Sunshine broke through the leaves, framing roots and trees and dust or pollen that hung in the air. Rutey moved his hand slowly up from beside his levis, the clay mud chilling his bare arm and wrist. Damp leaves brushed against his palm. He pushed his hand out further, stretching until his finger tips touched against what could only be the hand. He left his fingers there, nails touching nails.

Rutey had felt glory twice in his life. Once was when his mother dressed him in his Sunday shirt and took him to see a visiting preacher. There had been a polio scare, and the anxious town mothers fought to get their children under the hand of the preacher. The preacher had blessed all the children in the tent. When Rutey's turn came, the strong hands of the preacher grabbed him firmly by the top of his head. The preacher's nails bit into his scalp while Rutey kneeled in the dirt of the tent. His mother wept and the preacher chanted and Rutey had wanted to cry. As they left the meeting, his mother leaned over and said, "There was glory in that man's hands."

The second time Rutey felt glory was as he lay on the mud in the thin forest.

Across the distance of the meadow, a door

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slammed or a board was dropped. Rutey sat up suddenly. The thin forest held still and Rutey shivered. He stood up and nervously looked around, wondering for the first time if anyone was near. He stood tensed in the narrow clearing. It was very important that no one find the body.

Rutey pulled at a garland of branches until it broke loose from a nearby bush. He squashed the branch down over the shoe and scattered some dirt and yellowed leaves across the top, filling in the gaps. Then he ran down the path, looking back once to see if the shoe was still covered. He crossed the meadow and tripped after he'd climbed under the pasture fence. He didn't think Mrs. Rosemary would yell about the dirt and mud on his levis, but he brushed himself off as best he could.

After he'd washed his hands, Mrs. Rosemary fed him hot, thick soup and a slice of fresh baked bread. She talked about the weather and gave Rutey's levis a side-ways glance as he drank his second glass of milk.

"Now you run this loaf over to your mother." The loaf was still warm. He struggled to balance it as he pulled open the back door to his house. It was dark and quiet in the kitchen. Rutey put the loaf on the counter and then ran up the stairs to his room.

On the nightstand next to Rutey's bed there was a small, framed Sunday school picture of Jesus with children sitting on his lap. Rutey took the picture and stuffed it into the back pocket of his levis.

The heavy smell of bread still hung in the kitchen. Rutey pulled a long knife awkwardly out of a counter drawer. He held the bread tightly, his fingers pressing dents into the crust, and

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stood on his toes while he sawed one small piece off the end of the loaf. Then he ran out the back door, letting the screen slam shut.

The meadow was wider than it had ever been before. Rutey ran until his lungs burnt. He stopped for a moment before he entered the thin forest, not wanting to wonder if the body was still there, but wondering anyway. He lurched forward down the path, his hand tightening around the bread, scattering crumbs through his fingers. He stopped in front of the fisherman spruce, and it took him a moment to realize that he was staring at the leaves that covered the shoe. Nothing had moved. He could see his own footprints and where he'd sat down in the mud. He let his breath settle before he reached out and carefully pushed away the branch.

The shoe was as sturdy as it had been the first time that he'd seen it. Rutey relaxed and sat back on the path. The sun was just past high noon, and it beat down warmly on the back of his tee shirt. He moved closer to the bush and rolled under it.

There was a damp, sweet smell next to the body. Rutey unclenched his fist until the crumbled piece of bread rolled from his hand to the other hand under the bush. Then he took the framed picture of Jesus and put it on the open palm, on top of the bread.

Rutey stared at the hand. He tentatively reached out and patted the tops of the rigid fingers. He had been trying to find a word and he found it and spoke it in a hushed tone under the cover of the leaves.

"Amen." It was the only word of glory that he could remember.

Rutey woke up the next morning when his mother nudged him and told him to put on his blue striped shirt and a clean pair of levis.

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"I'm dropping you off at your Aunt Mabel's and you can play with your cousins all day. Won't that be nice?" She patted down the folds of his bed-spread as he stood barefoot on the chilly morning floor.

"I don't want to go."

"Don't be silly. Go wash and put on your shirt."

Rutey stared distractedly out of the window that faced the meadow. Two of McCulland's cats were slinking across the pasture in a low crouch. He squinted his eyes and tried to find the top of the tree that marked the path into the forest. He thought he saw it, but he couldn't be sure if it was the right one.

"You're just a baby." Rutey blinked back the tears as his older cousin shoved him against the splintered wooden fence.

"Cry baby." His younger cousin Jeff took up the chant.

"You boys stop that right now." Mabel stood on the back porch wiping her hands on her apron. "You leave Rutey alone and don't fight."

When Mabel had gone back into the house, Rutey pushed himself away from the fence and walked over to the low shed.

"He won't do it. He's a cry baby." Jeff and his brother Georgie knudged each other and grinned as Rutey climbed on top of a box and reached up to the shingles that hung over the edge of the shed's roof. They were still grinning when he stood on top of the shed and stared down over the edge. The grass was wide and blank below him.

"Double dare you, Rutey." Georgie walked gleefully over to the shed. "Jump."

Rutey turned his face up to the sky and spread

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his arms wide. Then he took a single step off the roof of the shed.

"Eat your meat, Rutey. What happened to your face?" His father salted the pork chops on his plate and pushed the green beans towards Rutey's mother. "Good beans, Irene. What happened to his face?"

"He jumped off the shed behind Mabel's." Irene spooned the green beans onto her plate. "She said she thought he might need some stitches."

"Looks okay to me." His father peered at the lump and rough scratch on Rutey's forehead.

"Doesn't your sister ever watch those kids?"

"She said he just climbed on top of the shed and jumped off."

"There's some excitement up McCulland's way." His father forked another spoonful of potatoes and carved at his meat. "The sheriff and the county coroner were parked in front of his place when I drove by. I stopped to see what all the commotion was about."

Rutey's mother fussed with a pork chop. "I've never felt quite right about that family."

"They found that old Dobson dead in the forest. He keeled right over. They think it was his heart."

Irene eyed her husband curiously. "They did? Doesn't surprise me. He went off to live by himself, why it must be 10 years ago by now. Ever since his farm failed and his wife ran off."

"They wouldn't have found him 'cept for a piece of glass. He was damned near buried under the bushes, from what I hear. McCulland was out walking his mare this afternoon and he saw something shining out from the forest. Damned if it didn't lead him right to the body. Eat your meat, Rutey. That boy's scrawny, Irene."

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Rutey's head pounded. He looked up once at his father and then dropped his eyes to stare at the food on his plate. He tried to cut the pork chop using his knife and fork but the meat twisted and turned under the pressure and then flipped off his plate, taking the beans and some mashed potatoes with it.

"Look at that mess," Irene shoved her plate to one side and stood up to get a towel.

"I swear, Robert, that boy's manners come from your side of the family."

Rutey looked at the stain of gravy on the table cloth. He slid from his chair and stood at the edge of the table, swallowing furiously. He started towards the stairs and then stood indecisively in the middle of the room.

"Just where do you think you're going?" His mother waved the towel at him, one hand on her hip.

Rutey ran out the back door, listening to the screen slam behind him. The evening was fading into night, taking the bright streak of orange on the horizon down with it. He started towards the pasture fence and then stopped before reaching it. There was nothing for him inside the thin forest.

"I'll tan your hide, boy." His father was a thick shadow on the back porch. "You get in to your mother."

Rutey didn't know if he could go back into the house. He stood quite still and alone under the heavy arc of sky.

There was a dark ache inside of him. He had no words for it, no name; nothing had yet taught him what that ache meant. He stared up at his father and saw him as if from a great distance. Then he slowly walked up the back steps and into

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the house, carrying the silent weight of that nameless ache deep inside him.

His father sent him up to bed without supper and Rutey lay there under the light cover of his sheet. A breeze flapped at the curtains and they made shadows on the wall above his bed. He looked over at his dresser, at the empty spot where the picture of Jesus had stood. He reached his hand out futilely, wanting something there that could be touched. A night bird screamed and cats fought viciously in the open field.

He rolled over and lay back in his bed, waiting for the night to end. In the morning, if the day were clear, he'd head down the stream that ran out of the thin forest. There were beaver ponds and he knew that if he lay motionless on his stomach, he could watch fish undulate in the quiet currents and watch the wind raise up the water.

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*Maggie Valentine*

SUSTENANCE

Maybe we keep our dead alive  
the way some hunting peoples  
hold what they kill in their hands,  
ask its blessing, swallow its heart,  
the brown bear, the salmon  
becoming the blood of their marrow,  
the leap in the narrows at flood tide.

Maybe that's what I'm doing  
standing here in a glacial wind  
at the edge of this half-frozen river,  
feasting on the sight of a hundred sea ducks  
sheltering out of the blow,  
understanding at last the lift  
in the wing of a snowgoose,  
the importance of the blue universe  
of the redtailed hawk and the bronze  
of pheasant rising out of rushes  
up to the startled sun.

Maybe that's what I've done  
that I can run all the way home  
not remembering how I got here  
possessed of the voice of the trumpeter swan,  
and sing out to the dog by the hearth,  
" You should see! "  
feeling as warm as my red tulip in its pot.

Ann Wagner

a winter morning, Paris 1979

Rue des Ecoles, the smothered Pantheon  
breathes frost into a scarf

a man crossing the street  
leads seven white ponies

by one rope into an expanse  
of snow on snow on snow

something disappears into its essence  
and even our violent breath

leaves no proof where we have gone

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