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judice.

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Constance Clark

WALKING IN THE WOODS

You point out the maple,
its limbs split off, cracked
by lightning from last night's storm.
The limbs hang, still thinly attached
to the tree. The exposed inner wood
dries out, is put to no use.

This is the tree's last stand.
One more torrent will uplift it.
The roots will grasp at dry air
like an overturned spider's legs
wave in a panic for succor.

I ask you: are you coming back?
will you stay in one place?
You stare at the tree,
give no answer.

Up speeds the moon to be stabbed
into relief by the tree's jagged wound.
It passes on whole, though,
a circle circling.

That is the way of planets and satellites.
They move in fixed orbits, unhindered.

How storms have broken me.
In my throat a splinter rises,
a thorn to meet your tongue when we kiss.

SOUTHEAST ASIA THROUGH MY WINDOW

A rabbit hobbles in deep snow,
kicks a powder cloud.
Avalanches tumble down a tree.
Three men, wrapped in scarves, meet
and fog their breaths at one another,
smile red-faced, point.
A cat is hurrying around their shadows.
They move on, reshaping a cluster of
footprints near a snowman.
The fire hydrant sinks another inch.
Slowly one car passes, lights shining
through a dusk of falling snow,
its wipers, caked with ice,
the only living sound.

I search a jungle
with a rifle in my hands,
a place to pause, to listen,
to freeze,
to take deadly aim.

Jon Daunt

UNDER WATER

pull back the covers
dip a cloth in the basin
run it over the air

the shape of her
faint clinging, gentle with age
you were with her to the end

doing what you could, feeding her,
moving a washcloth
between the small movements she was

able to make, to help
you pull the covers lower
dip your fingers in a dry basin

run air over air
lift a leg of weightlessness, an arm
trying to recall the shape of her

the seasoned flash of her eyes
swimming in lakes of soft flesh
you feel her stare

hang her ghost clothes carefully
tiptoe out of the room like a
cat among ruins

to cook another meal of
empty plates,
draw an extra breath

GRASSHOPPERS

She stoops to pick
Squash blossoms that begin
To spread orange with morning. She is
Thinking of the day
Her mother and she walked
To the stream and saw
Water collecting. The sunlight
On their faces...A quick

Absence of sun
Strokes her back.
She stands and sees
A live cloud
Cross the sun.
Humming
Rushing like
A waterfall then
Like wet
Snowflakes they begin to
Drop and
Click as they
Get closer, pelt, pile
On top of each other,
Greedy for space and
Food. Her face
Twists. They
Pluck at her cotton
Blouse. Seersucker. She raises
An arm.
On sleeves,
Rake handle, fence.
She would cry but
Is afraid
To open her mouth,
Runs
For the gate, thinks:
Seersucker. The blossoms
Close, believe
It is night.

Gary Fincke

IN THE CHILD'S STRANGE HOUSE

In the child's strange house
Is a smell like fish,
And he is afraid of dying
In water, being washed up
On a littered shore.

In the child's strange house
Are shadows come loose
From their objects, and he fears
Streetlights, things behind him
Engulfing his tiny form.

In the child's strange house
Is the rim of the world,
And there is nothing to keep
Him from sailing, like Columbus,
Over the flat world's falls.

In the child's strange house
Are stairs to the Earth's
Center, and he dreams of being
Buried at the end of each
Journey underground.

In the child's strange house
The closed doors make him long
For the secret room, the tales
Unlocked, endings stacked
Neatly on a sad, rainbow shelf.

PROBABLY THERE ARE STILL HOLES

Probably there are still holes in the street
Where I lived, and those holes are filled with filth
As old as I am. Probably someone

Is promising to fill them while children
Are forced to fish the water by bullies,
Kiss blind-folded what they find. Probably

No one has died from this kiss, quivering
Through spring and each threatening thaw; I live,
My friends grew up. Probably, too, we are

Better for it, would return for pictures,
Old neighbors mugging beside the scum holes
As if we were happy, as if we had

Discovered love through our lips, accepting
Our bleak objects with something like desire.

Gary Fincke

THE ROLLED-UP PHOTOGRAPH

The summer Paul Evers turned eighteen was the same year his Great-Uncle Willy had a heart attack in May. Paul's parents, who years before had relied on Uncle Willy to babysit Paul while they established a business, immediately fixed up the unused guest room, and one afternoon in late June Uncle Willy moved in.

Although he only brought two suitcases, no one spoke of how long he would stay. The furnished apartment where he had lived required climbing stairs; there was time enough to look for something more suitable.

Despite the cushioned porch furniture, Uncle Willy sat out the summer on a hardbacked chair found cobwebbed in the garage. To Paul he appeared to be an apparition of himself. His white hair and pale skin gave him the look of having been dipped in flour, and yet he sat stiffly upright on the chair as if posture were something he could not let go of.

In early July the peas, which were a little late, came in, and Uncle Willy shelled for several hours each afternoon, sitting just out of the sun on that ugly chair. It was placed where the shadow line from the roof shrank to at about four o'clock. When the sun reached him, Uncle Willy would put the peas aside and go to his room for a nap before dinner.

It was during these shadow hours that Uncle Willy would talk as his fingers worked on the hulls. Paul was working second shift, and there was nothing to do after lunch but wait for the hour and a half to pass before he drove to the factory in the city.

"You remember the deer we saw once along the Crick Road?" he would ask, and Paul would shake his head, recall nothing, not even the look

of the road itself which was now littered with cheap houses erected during the 1950's.

"You remember the way you cried whenever your head got wet in the rain?" Uncle Willy questioned, and Paul would smile but shake his head again.

"One time I got you a cardboard box from the grocer and you wore it when we walked home from the store. He made eyeholes for you, carved them out with a butcher's knife."

Paul's childhood was expanded this way, pushed back into that preschool time that had nearly disappeared from his memory. Whatever Uncle Willy described, he accepted, allowing the old man to define these years for him.

"You remember that dog that chased you right up onto the porch?" he queried, and for once Paul nodded, surprised, saw the mongrel barking at him, his flight through the alley to his grandmother's porch.

"Well, see, you are that little boy I knew and took care of. I thought for a while you were a changeling, that somebody switched you when I wasn't looking."

The dog had stood on the porch snarling at him, and Paul had been afraid it would leap through the screen door. He found himself remembering what his uncle had said, tried an imitation:

"I swear, if you don't act just like my sister in front of dogs, little Paul, the scairdy cat of the family."

Uncle Willy looked at his closely. "Now, I never made fun of you that way. And your grandmother was a wonderful lady. You don't remember her either, I bet."

Paul pressed for an image, found it as vague as the way he saw the world without his contact lenses. "A little. I remember her funeral when Uncle Harry fell down carrying the casket at the cemetery."

Fincke/THE ROLLED-UP PHOTOGRAPH

"Harry? Rest his soul. Poor Harry sure took a tumble that day, didn't he? We thought for a minute we were going to have to go through the whole thing again for him."

From time to time that summer Paul wondered why those fragments he retained centered consistently around fear. The grandmother smiling from the old photograph was gone; the fear of dogs had stayed. His dislike of rain seemed comic now; the apprehension of funerals dotted his life.

The job he had between high school and college was easy but filthy. He unloaded boxcars full of hundred pound sacks of flour or dried beans or dehydrated vegetables. Ordinarily, they could be lifted off by machine, but several times a night when a boxcar was opened the bags would be in disarray, and he and another summer worker would have to remove them by hand. The weight was what he loved, his shoulders and arms and chest expanding as the New England August stayed dry and hot. By the time college began, he would have confidence in his body.

But the hours were poor. He was impatient for school to start. Uncle Willy, too, seemed uneasy on the porch, the peas no longer in season, the corn not quite ripe. The lull lasted for over two weeks, and he took to closing his eyes as he sat holding a book, starting and stopping the stories he told in a way that frustrated Paul on those days he could sit and listen.

The tales had gone back in time, receding across decades and leaving Paul's childhood in the future. In mid-August Uncle Willy reached back to World War I, showed Paul a picture of the men he had fought beside in Europe. The photograph was one of those long, narrow kind that are rolled up and kept tight with a rubber band. The men looked to Paul as if they could have all been related somehow. There was no

way of telling which one was Uncle Willy.

"Up here, up here," he laughed. "See?" And he pointed to a face that looked nothing at all like himself.

Paul nodded and Uncle Willy laughed again. "Fifty years ago almost, and I remember it better than you can the things that happened only ten years back." He held the photograph open, and Paul realized that he could not recall which of the faces Uncle Willy had pointed to.

"I'll tell you what I remember most--a girl I met in France."

Paul waited, searched again for the face in the picture. "And me never marrying, but the girl is what I remember best. Not because she was pretty, because she was lost."

Uncle Willy rolled up the picture and carefully replaced the rubber band. "What was so peculiar was that she was standing right there in her own little village and she said she was lost. By then the war was over in that part of France; people were starting to put things back together, and here was this girl, about your age, I'd say, who came up to me and told me she was lost."

A moment passed. Paul wondered if the story would remain a fragment, but then Uncle Willy started once more: "Well, it turned out she lived right on that street where we were standing, but she kept insisting, even when a boy who turned out to be her brother came and took her home. I'll tell you, Paul, I saw good men die and bad men die, but the girl standing there a hundred feet from her home telling me she was lost is what I remember most."

He stopped, seemed distracted as he turned the picture around and around in his hands. "Do you think she'd remember me now?" he suddenly asked Paul.

Paul tried to guess which answer he should give. "It's hard to say," he tried lamely.

"No. No." Uncle Willy looked impatiently at him. "I don't mean me sitting here; I mean this me, the one in the uniform. Would she be able to pick me

out from the rest of the other soldiers?"

Paul lifted his hands in a gesture of helplessness. Uncle Willy handed him the picture. "Here, keep this for me. Show your kids my picture some day."

"I'll bring it out here tomorrow," Paul said. "You can tell me about some of the guys you fought with."

Uncle Willy shrugged. The next afternoon Paul went to work early to replace someone who had called in sick. Uncle Willy, while shucking the first of the corn, died, his head nodding forward, his body remaining stoically on the wooden chair.

The following night, riding with a friend to a leaving-for-college party on the other side of the city, Paul lost a contact lens. Working in the fine dust all afternoon and night irritated his eyes. Thoughtlessly, he popped the right lens out into his palm as they traveled along the expressway. The windows on both sides were down to let in the midnight air; a gust of it caught the lens and took it outside.

They didn't consider stopping. On Friday Paul wore neither his old, weak prescription glasses or the left lens. The funeral, as a result, seemed to take place far away, and when Paul leaned to help pick up the coffin, he had to squint to be sure of the handle. Some of the relatives, seeing him hesitate, might have thought he was being especially thoughtful, upset, or reverent. When they reached the grave, he was careful of his feet, remembering how Uncle Harry had fallen eleven years before.

* * *

PLAYING STATUES

We spun like
moons broken
from orbit and

stopped mid-
whirl;
 at the stump
of the dogwood

that died the summer
it didn't rain, I
froze and became

A tree:

My roots hold
the earth
in place;

my leaves
tether the sun.
My bony skin

itches the wind,
making him
hurry; and I

tremble
the sunlight
like the wings of

A bird:

My feathers
smooth the breeze
to the sheen

of polished wood.
Among the dogwood
blossoms, pale

as the light before
dawn, my eye
flickers like a

green flame, then
holds steady, staring
hard as the back of

A beetle:

I never forget to
keep one foot
on wood. I move

but hold my
tree in place
behind me.

THE SQUIRREL-TREE

Barry sat on the lowest of the three slate steps that led up to his building's lobby, gently pried apart a sandwich cookie, and licked the cream filling that adhered to one of the wafers. The building fronted a tree-lined boulevard. The August sun would have made the slate step hot, but the big oak that Barry called the squirrel-tree cast a pool of shade. As his mother had instructed, in summer Barry was careful not to exert himself, and whenever he could he sat in the shade. He was fair and perspired easily. Often he had to wipe his glasses clean on his polo shirt.

Up the boulevard, some men were cutting down the trees. Barry's mother had explained that the automobiles needed more space, so they were going to widen the street. After the work was completed, they were going to plant new trees and everything would be the same again. They were progressing up the boulevard, another block each day. Barry listened. He could tell by how loud the whine of the buzzsaw had become that tomorrow they would cut down the trees on his block. That would be interesting to watch, but afterward it would never be possible to play Hide-n-Seek again because the squirrel-tree was home base.

Some summer evenings when his sister, Enid, had to mind him, they played Hide-n-Seek. Barry was always "it." Enid would tell him to count, by ones, to a thousand. He wouldn't cradle his head in his arms, but instead stand on the exposed roots, embrace the broad trunk, tightly close his eyes, and place his face flush against the big oak. It was difficult to count so high, and sometimes he forgot and had to start over, but he did not mind because the soft bark smelled musty and warm and safe. He loved pressing his face into that home base. From within the tree he thought he felt the movements of little families

of squirrels who lived without fear in the shelter given by the tree. They came and went and did what squirrels do, and Barry could feel every tiny tremor against his outstretched hands, as though the tree itself were quick. It was easy to find Enid because she was usually with her friends on a bench in the playground beside their building. "Did you find me already?" she'd ask. "Why don't we play again? I'll let you be 'it,'" she'd say and he would return to the tree, again lean into its musty bark, again count, and again find Enid. They would play until it grew dark, and then he had to take the elevator upstairs because it was time for him to sleep.

That morning, his mother had helped him dress. She was going downtown, and so threaded a key to the apartment on a coarse string and looped the string around Barry's neck. The key felt heavy. The cord chafed his neck. Then she'd sent him out. Barry had gone to the playground. Some boys were playing punchball and they asked him if he wanted to play, but Barry had to say no because it was too hot and he might get overheated. There was no grass, so he sat on the brown dirt and watched the boys for a time. Something tickled across his ankle, and that was when he noticed the ants marching in a line before him. He watched them for a while, and then tried an experiment. Once, on television, he'd seen how if you were lost in the woods, you could make a signal fire. So he tried to focus the bright sunlight through his glasses and aim the spot of light at an ant. The ants moved too quickly. He became tired of the experiment, and so with his index finger he reached out and one at a time crushed ants. When there were no more ants, he looked up. The boys were gone.

Barry felt very grown-up when he'd let himself into the apartment and made his own lunch. He spread peanut butter thickly and evenly, careful to cover every part of the white bread without

smearing over the edge onto the crust. From the refrigerator he took the glass of milk his mother had poured for him, and when he was finished, as his mother had told him to do, he put the glass, knife, and plate on the ledge beside the sink. His mother hated any kind of mess, especially in her kitchen, but if Barry tried to rinse the dishes they would surely drop and break. He washed his face clean of the milk mustache and again went outside. He made certain to lock the apartment door, and he again felt very grown-up.

He'd gone for a walk, but because he was not allowed to cross the streets, he could not go very far. He circled the block twice, the second time going through the playground. From the corner of the block, he'd looked across the avenue to where the men were cutting trees. The air was thick with dust and the green smell of sap. Though the noise was very loud, and the men only across the avenue, he could not see much. That was when he'd decided that a cookie would be nice.

He'd walked to his building and into the cool lobby. Inside the elevator he had to jump to reach the five, and the heavy key bounced on his chest. He unlocked the apartment door, and the moment it swung open he heard his mother and Enid shouting at each other. He went to the kitchen and took a single cookie, then let himself out and went down to the stoop of the building to enjoy his cookie while he listened to the not-far-off buzzsaw cutting down the trees.

He licked the wafer clean of cream filling and then popped it whole into his mouth. He planned to nibble the second half of the cookie, took a tiny bite, and then, unable to resist, popped it, too, into his mouth whole.

"Hi Chubs."

It was Enid. She sat beside him on the step.

"'Lo."

"What's doing?"

"Nothing. They're cutting down the trees. What

were you and Mom fighting about?"

"The usual," she said. Barry did not know what the usual was, but the answer satisfied him. "How'd you hear?"

"I came in to get a cookie."

"Oh." She looked over her shoulder, took a cigarette from her shirt pocket, tapped it on her wrist, and lighted it with a single quick strike of a match.

"Mom doesn't like you to smoke."

"That's not all she doesn't like. I'm fifteen, right? I can do what I want, right?"

"Guess so."

She tousled his hair. "That's my Chubs. Listen, you have to do me a favor. Mom wants me to baby-sit you tonight. She's having another man over, after dinner, you know, for private-time, before they go out, but I got to go someplace."

Barry was always sent out with Enid for private-time. "We can play Hide-n-Seek. I really want to. It'll be the last. . ."

"Barry, listen to me. It's just a couple of hours. I got to go someplace and Mom wants you out of the way. So, here's the favor. You and me go out after dinner, like always, you know, casual. But I got to go someplace to meet a guy so you just hang out until it's late enough, and then go upstairs by yourself. See?"

"By myself?"

"Right."

"It'll be dark."

"Scared?" she challenged.

"No," he lied.

"Good old Chubs," she said and squeezed him with her arm around his shoulders. "I'll do you a favor sometime," she said, stood, and tousled his hair once more. Then she left him.

Barry stayed on the slate step until the noise of the buzzsaw from up the boulevard stopped. The shade cast by the squirrel-tree deepened as

the sun lowered, and a slight breeze rustled its leaves. It was near dinner-time, so Barry went upstairs, washed, and watched cartoons. His mother asked him if he'd had a nice day and he said he had, then she went to the kitchen and prepared dinner. They ate hurriedly when Enid finally came home. There was no talk. After dinner, Enid cleared the table and washed the dishes. She gave him a chocolate cupcake and called through the house, "We're going out now," but their mother could not hear because she was in the shower. Enid took Barry downstairs, checked that his key was still on the cord about his neck, and walked him to a bench in the playground. "Got to go," she said and kissed his forehead. "Remember, not a word to Mom."

Barry stayed on the bench. There were other people in the playground, but they were older than the kids during the day. He saw his mother's friend park his car and go into the building. At first, waiting was easy, but then the shadows lengthened and the air became cool on Barry's neck. At first, he could see the other people in the park, but then he could only hear the sudden laughter--from behind him, or in front, or from anywhere at all. He wiped his glasses in a pinch of cloth from his shirt and waited. When Enid was with him, she had a watch and so knew when their mother's private-time was finished, but Barry had no watch and it was too dark to see if his mother and this friend had gone. So he waited until all the cars passing on the street outside the playground had their headlights on, and then he counted to a thousand, by ones, and then, because he could not wait any more, he ran home through the dark, his heartbeat slowing only when he stepped into the yellow light of the elevator. No one was in the apartment. It smelled of cigarette smoke. A hall light was on. Barry undressed, climbed between the crisp sheets of his bed, and, after a time, slept.

The next day they came for the squirrel-tree. Barry again sat in the shade on the lowest of the three slate steps. Four men, all dressed in dark green coveralls, arrived in two dark green trucks, a pickup and what a man told Barry when he asked was called a cherry-picker. He warned Barry to stay the hell back.

They started on home base. "Big mother, ain't it?" one said and climbed into the cherry-picker that lifted him high into the air to where he could not be seen in all the leaves. Then the whine of the buzzsaw began and Barry could hear nothing else. Small branches fell to the ground and the other three men tossed the branches into the pickup truck. For a moment the buzzsaw stopped, and the man in the cherry-picker called, "Here it comes." With a loud snap and a great thump, a major limb fell to the earth. Each of the three men started his own buzzsaw. They straddled the limb, laughing and shouting over the very loud noise, and they sawed branches until the limb was stripped. Then they sliced the limb into sections, lifted the sections with chains, and heaved the pieces clanging onto the truck.

The men were interesting, but Barry was even more interested by the cast out squirrels. There were too many of them to have been in just one tree. All morning the men had been cutting trees, working their way up the block until they came to the big oak, and in every tree there must have been a whole family of squirrels. Maybe two families, Barry thought, there were so many of them darting about the sidewalk, running into the street, hiding beneath the parked cars. They chattered and ran in confused circles, here, there, and back to where they began, moving as fast as they could and getting no place. They were very lively, fun to watch, better than cartoons. He saw one dash into the street and get squashed pink by a passing car. That was when Barry got his good idea.

He ran into the lobby, waited for the elevator, hopped with impatience as the elevator climbed to five, and tore through the hall to the apartment door. His fingers fumbled the key and the cord at his neck scraped, but he at last unlocked the door. No one was home. He pulled a chair into the kitchen, climbed onto the chair and from the chair onto the ledge beside the sink. In the cabinet over the sink, his mother saved neatly folded brown grocery bags. He took one, nearly fell from the ledge, held the bag in his teeth, carefully climbed down to the chair and the floor and hurried from the apartment. Too excited to wait for the elevator, he ran down the five flights of stairs and out to the street.

Home base was nearly gone. All the limbs and branches were aboard the truck. There was no more shade. The men no longer laughed and shouted to each other. Their grim faces were red and encrusted with gritty dust stuck to sweat. Barry did not want to get in the way, so he stood near the steps for a time while the men sliced section after section of the big oak's trunk. The squirrels were still there. A few more had been squashed pink.

When all that remained was a very short stump, the men attached chains to the last big sections of the tree and attached the chains to the truck. Because there was no more room in the pickup, they drove off slowly, dragging pieces of what had been home base behind them in the gutter.

And then there was nothing but wood chips, the squirrels, and Barry. He would catch a squirrel in the bag and give it a place to go. His mother and Enid would have to help him care for the squirrel. They might even like a squirrel. He did not know what squirrels ate, but Enid or his mother might. Perhaps squirrels ate sandwich cookies.

But he could not catch a squirrel. They were all about, running here and there, and though he only wanted to help them the squirrels didn't know

that, and so when he crouched and ran after them with the open bag, they ran from him. Barry tried very hard for a very long time. He realized he was getting overheated and that it was getting late. Soon, Enid or his mother might come home and that would ruin his surprise. He sat on the curbstone and wiped clean his glasses. Then, because he knew he was unable to catch a live squirrel, and because he still wanted to give a squirrel a place to go, Barry carefully looked both ways, waited until there were no cars, and stepped into the street.

It was less messy than he'd thought to pick up a squashed squirrel and drop it in the bag. There were so many that he could choose the ones that were least damaged. Four were enough; two for Enid and two for his mother. He took only the squirrels whose heads were intact because he thought their dark startled eyes were so pretty. The bag was getting wet with ooze stuff, so he would put the squirrels in the freezer compartment and let his mother or sister discover his surprise. All the way up in the elevator, he shook with the anticipation that comes only to those who are able to give selflessly.

* * *

Margaret Holland

THE EASTER SOUP

My retarded cousin Billy
eats his Easter soup
to a chorus
-mothers, sisters, fathers, cousins-
of "slow down" and
"take it easy."
He is nineteen. My father tells him:
"Put your spoon down
put your spoon down
and take three deep breaths,"
the chorus joins in.

Billy's mother
begins to cough
and gag, her face red.
Billy's sister says,
"She makes me so nervous,"
and follows her mother
into the kitchen.

Billy's father says,
"She makes me choke when she does that."
And explains, "I have gastritis from the war
but her nerves are from everyday life."
He talks on about
flushing Japanese out of the Fijis
while Billy takes three deep breaths
and lays his spoon by his bowl.

FOR MARIAN'S BIRTHDAY

*Fog*³

Cool snow breeze
through a crack in the window.
My breath calms
my glassy vision,
the radiator warms my feet.
I open the window
a bit wider
to hear the slow motion tap dance
of snow on leaf, sheer
and brittle as near transparent clay.

Through snow, trees
form crevices in pure
grey air that obscures
the far shore
of the Naragansett.
Difficult air pushes past
wisps of ice, seeps in
with its hard message.
I wince
and blink
and fill the bleak,
hazed horizon.

William Meyer

TWO AIRS

I. WATER

The
nude
sits and
longs to be
entirely
sky.

II. THE STANDARD

Criss-crossed are
the shadows of trees
over the snow;

the sun is warm
through the glass
of the car;

and all the streets
are clean.

Larry Moffi

THE ANGEL PASSES OVER

for my Jewish grandfather

My father was no fighter
the way he led
with his chin. Thus

you welcomed him, your door
always open while Elijah
rustled the matzoh

from the shoe bag. Damn
the kids if they won't
last a sedar, you said

year after year as my father
carried nieces and nephews
to sleep in the featherbed.

At your last *Pesach*
in our house in Hartford
you found something *chumitz*

in every corner: wrong dishes,
television, corn oil
margarine, and my father

jobless. That year
we cut the sedar short
to eat, read left to right,

spoke English at the table.
And if grandma loved Robert Taylor,
still the angel passed over.

HANDS

All morning your hand
would not be held away
from the comfort of that game
and its promise. Side by side
on our backs on your bed,
fully clothed and eyes
closed. Hands open.

What brings your left hand
back I have held quietly
all these years, knowing
how much we share with other
boys grown up now and waking
to wives and children
in cities we'd only dreamt of.

We have traveled so far
to live safely
from the source of our secret,
from our fathers and the extreme
of childhood, its gestures
of choosing up and taking sides,
the terrible shaking of hands.

LEARNING TO FISH FRESH WATER

Go for something small
with minnows. It's no big deal,
and you're no one new
to these infectious waters.

Go blind on that still
bobber in the sun--the shimmering
women who kissed you off,
the one who loves you special--
and let it run
without the drag across the current
until he sets the hook himself
and takes it past the shadow line.

But this is all conjecture, advice
for when you luck is right.
No matter how bad it goes at first,
let the wind collapse
before you break
a cast among lilies
where tomorrow's lesson spawns.

What you catch throw back
quick. Today you learn the feel,
the unexpected size of things not seen.
When mosquitoes come, go home:
to fish is not to suffer.

George E. Murphy, Jr.

THE GIRL IN WINTER

does not seem bothered by the cold,
her pockets so deep the quiver or fist
is swallowed in darkness.
At the trolley stop, her scarves
lap at one another; her knees bend
to lower the slip, skirt, coat an inch.

In her bag she keeps a record
of correspondence and expenses. One page
reads: rent to Mrs. T \$18
dinner .87
no word today from Charles.

Through the steam on her breath,
she whispers her name to see its shape.
In woodsmoke and leaves, it is mid-afternoon
and dark already, the sky so low
it could lose its grip and fall.

In the frozen ground she feels
a tremor and looks for a shape
to break the black arch. Then,
night steps out from the tunnel.

There are men who would die for her
if they had to. She will never meet them.
Instead, she will board the trolley
and go to work always. She breathes
through her teeth to warm them. It
looks like a smile.

George E. Murphy, Jr.

EMILY

She's married wrong, this girl
who opened like a rose at the edge of town,
whose hair fell loose when she first held me,
when I'd forgotten who I was until she whispered it.

The sound of her voice speaking my name
rushes some nights on the wind when I walk there.
But it's a small town; those fields are paved now.

From my car, sometimes, I see her walking
and she's forgotten who I am or else
she doesn't want to wave. I let it go.
She's cut her hair and,
either plain behind dark glasses
or made-up to hide a bruise,
it's hard to see the girl she was
but I do.

Some days I want to tell her that I weep
and that I dream of her
but there is no way to say
that I am still drowning
in the slow wreck of her flesh
and so I drive past.

George E. Murphy, Jr.

TURNING THIRTY

While tonight, upstairs, my children
remember how to sleep,
I light thirty candles and stay awake,
trying to remember everything.
Slowly, the corners soften, walls
fall forward to meet the glow
of these thirty small flames
unable to heat a single room.
In this flickering of years, I
stand in my skin, my shadow drawn
behind me like the entrance to a cave.

What pours in is the great silence of time,
flecked with stars, like black rainwater
brimming in a barrel.
There's a kind of knowing that leans close
and is gone; tonight, above the house,
a stray comet, gathering and leaving its breath,
chases its tail across the wide night.

Out there, a child--
you know his face--is lost.
It is his breath under the door
that licks at the flames.
With a finger, in the grey frost
my breath makes on the windows,
I write his name, calling him home,
and turn away before morning comes again
and burns it clean.

SAUNA

In the tight room
we toss cups of water
onto lakestones,
rinse blazing rocks
and share the steam.

When the temple grows close
with heat,
we crack the sealed door,
splash in chilly autumn river.

My skin feels synthetic
until we sit along the dry hot bench
again opening our pores
to each other's thick imperfect bodies,
pleased in the incredible popping heat.

We brush one another
with vegetable bristles,
rinse away everyone else in our lives,
and go in beside the fire.

GRANDFATHER

The grass has started to work itself backwards.
A blade is no more than a bit in the mass
And I am sure there is meaning to it.
Individually and in rows the life retreats.
I call the family: wife, two children,
Grandchildren, in-laws; they watch
And the grass pulls easily beneath earth.
The youngest among us stretch and wish
To race into the yard, to see closer the green
Slither beneath dirt. I will not let them
And it is my house, my yard, my grass.
Already, a bird by a clump of dandelion
Is drawn to ground level and sucked under.
The wife is pointing and laughing; a young father
Remarks what a feat it is for mere turf;
A small girl cranes to see the last of a wing go down.
I can feel the house shake, the subtle rumble of the porch,
And it is not soon enough, not soon enough.

THE STREETLIGHT

It went up without warning.
One night I came to bed,
Closed the window and shade,
And still I could not keep out the light.
I glanced from my room but could not believe.
In the morning, in my housecoat,
I went out and it was there -
Dull then, but standing in the yard,
Thin obelisk. Its metal beat
Of early sun. Better than two stories
It hung over the front porch,
The chicken yard, the path
Between house and outhouse.
It is not mine to question
But the place is no better for it.
The road is two hundred yards away
And only myself, my husband,
Our two dogs and unnumbered cats
Stay here in the house.
Light in day and dark at night
Is the thing: a lamp or two
Early evening is enough proof of mastery.
Over the fields night after night this
New center gleams and the crop
In its lurid gray grows confused.
The insects and the bats have a gathering place
Less substantial than the old: more alluring.
Years I have stood in my bedroom,
Drying after the bath or changing
From warm clothes to cool, the window
Open, the outside universe invited to me.
Now I close the drape - I am
Cut off. Each thing in my house
Is object of the light. Poor husband,
How shall I be the stop of progress,
How shall I make of you but outline?

Robyn Supraner

CHRYSALID

That summer of the front porch
when our luck ran out
we carried our breakfast

outside: short of dawn.
That summer of the front porch
when the roof sprouted milkweed

and the gutters overflowed
we sat in our green silk tent
and closed our eyes.

That summer of the front porch
when the days, like butterflies,
were stretched and pinned against the sky

spun-out
we slept in our cocoon: gypsy moths.
That summer of the front porch

when cicadas stormed the night
and took the valleys with their shrill cries
we listened

dreaming the dark passage back.

I'M COMING AROUND, BUT

on the window table,
locked in moonlight,
a fruit bowl
empty so long
I'm amazed, this
and each time,
at the dust
on my fingertips.

Etta Ruth Weigl

SEVENTH AGE

He does not know me.
He whose fumbling in the dark
Started me toward this moment
No longer calls my name.

Day by day, his journey is the same
Through rooms worn fifty years.
When he must take the stairs,
He clings to the railing with both hands
And foot by reaching foot descends
Backwards.

He shuffles through the house
In endless search for things mislaid--
A check, a book, a cufflink--
Something lost, irretrievable,
Like my name.

Ann Yarmal

A DRY WELL IN WINTER

These days people are worried
my friend says
she may have to dig
slit trenches in the back yard
and she knows tomorrow or next week
they will be coming
to shut off the mains
I laugh and say the gold
coast has turned into an armpit
and we drive along in silence

Later I see on television
the interviews carried on
along the streets
near restaurants
where people drink cool water
and pretend it will not happen

I turn the television off
I remember the incredulity
the disbelief it happened
as a child when you left me at the convent
as a bride when you left me with your mother
as a woman when I couldn't make you love me

I keep turning on the faucet
looking for water that isn't there
recalling the waste

CONTRIBUTORS

Constance Clark's work has appeared in *Stone Country*, *Moving Out*, *Wind* and others. She recently read her work at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.

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