



El sueño
de la razón
produce
monstruos

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Ode to the Corner of the Drug House Down the Gravel Road Off the Two-Lane Highway
#44 *Darren C. Demaree*

From here,
the valley
looks like
a good fever.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of six poetry collections, most recently “Many Full Hands Applauding Inelegantly” (2016, 8th House Publishing). His seventh collection “Two Towns Over” was recently selected the winner of the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and is due out March 2018. He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

Poem for June *Michael Landreth*

To begin with, you sing tiny sounds. The latch of a door
as I leave the house, tree limbs untwisting
to allow a full growth, dandelion seeds
touching down in their pockets
of earth like thumbprints.

A girl jumping rope afternoons now that
spring has softened the sidewalk. I watch you,

June, playing tag with the hills, hanging yellow
around their necks like a dare. You open my windows
to let in the breezes. Please,
just leave me out of it.

Voices across the street, charcoal smoke
and laughter—their cheeks
and the trees are flush with you, June, as if nothing
is wrong and regret makes no sense
when the kids can sleep late, when suggestions
are offered in this many colors.

This evening, swatting bees from my glass,
I will sip your approaching twilight.
I'll adopt your agenda, and forgive
what I'd rather not.

Michael Landreth has lived in all four corners of the country, earning degrees from Auburn University and the University of Idaho. He is currently a PhD candidate in English at the University of Rhode Island. He has raised three kids who could take or leave his poetry.

April's Burial *Sarah Lillus*

Heavy shovel fit for grave digging,
your gray eyes, the way you shuffled
about carefully like an older man.

You never visited Virginia, a place
I never feel stuck like I did back home,
a box filled with solitude,

boredom as the color blue.
Harsh winters where we fell
against our bones.

I dig the hole, throw lucky
stones in first. Then your body,
no heavy doubt, no ache.

Then petals, small white pieces
that will know you until
a delicate decay.

I break for black tea
before the final dirt.
Earth covers you, nature's tarp,

the cloth on your body disappears,
your complacent face. You've already left us,
stranded birds in winter, our wings unable to lift.

Sarah Lilius is the author of four chapbooks including the two most recent, *GIRL* (dancing girl press, 2017), and *Thirsty Bones* (Blood Pudding Press, 2017). Some of her publication credits include the *Denver Quarterly*, *Bluestem*, *Tinderbox*, *Luna Luna Magazine*, *Entropy*, and *Flapperhouse*. Her website is sarahlilius.com.

The Garden (Northville, Michigan) *Kimberley Quiogue Andrews*

Springsummer, and the world has left us
with red raspberries and asparagus.

In the cranial space occupied by
my mother's childhood garden, I

think more grew at one point—lettuces,
dollops of eggplant beading like guesses

on the question of soil. It's grown strange,
the mind a near monocrop, a turned page

against all odds. Asparagus like children
if left to stretch past tenderness—then

a feathered riot, high as your waist,
deep as a ruffled pool. We face

into the breeze in the spring
because the world insists on shifting

sideways, the tumblers in the season's lock
clicking like a greenish clock

against the earth's plated casing.
The sustaining keys are ripening

currently both in my head and along
the house, where their late June song

is a changeable aria, the white notes
fluttering beneath. A certain labor floats

in these folds, these lanky stalks,
and then my mother's favorite fruit. I walk

though years of raspberries, red dots
like bundles of tiny, vanished thoughts.

Something come then gone. We grow—
until all that is left is *o, o, o*—

Kimberly Quiogue Andrews is a poet and literary critic. She is also the author of *BETWEEN*, winner of the 2017 New Women's Voices Chapbook Prize from Finishing Line Press. She lives in Maryland and teaches at Washington College.

Fierce Hunger *Dolly Reynolds*

I was born with enormous appetites, into a family where such things were not allowed. When I was two months old, my mother told me, she brought me to the pediatrician, concerned because I nursed and nursed and never stopped.

“You were sucking me dry,” my mother said. “There was no satisfying you.”

In her version the pediatrician, too, was horrified, very concerned that I was gaining too much weight. He advised my mother to stop nursing and switch me to skim milk, allowing me to drink only a measured number of ounces and no more.

“You had no brakes,” my mother told me the doctor had concluded then. It was an amazingly prescient diagnosis in a baby so young.

“No brakes” became a phrase often repeated to the many psychiatrists my mother brought me to see. There were so many things wrong with me: I was greedy and jealous, hostile and oppositional. I was a liar. I snuck food and fought with my slim younger sister. My mother had to have padlocks installed on the kitchen cupboards, and once I even broke through those. In a family where every single other member was thin, I was fat.

“Don’t you wish you could cross your legs like this?” my mother would ask, her long dancer’s legs crossed both at the knee and at the ankle. I could barely bring one ham-like thigh over the other. “Don’t you wish you could see the bones in your hand?” she would ask, gliding her fingers up down as the bones moved in the back of her hand like mallets in a piano. In contrast, I could see that my own my hand was puffy, dough-like, dimpled where the knuckles should have been, grotesque.

I am not the only one who hungers. There is a series on TLC called *My 600-lb Life* that follows enormously obese individuals as they undergo weight loss surgery and then try to reclaim their lives. At the center of every episode is a Persian vascular surgeon, Dr. Nowzaradan (known as “Dr. Now” by his patients), whose Houston Renaissance Hospital is the only facility willing to risk operating on individuals who weigh more than six hundred pounds: patients who are considered “super morbidly obese,” those with BMIs exceeding fifty. These are the most massive patients in the country—people who are very close to death and have no other hope.

I have watched other television shows on the morbidly obese and have seen the way the camera trains a gaping eye on the molten rolls of flesh and the purple, elephantine masses that hang between trunk-like legs. In these other shows, I have watched the mothers of bedridden teenagers cook a dozen fried eggs and a pound of bacon for their child’s breakfast. I have watched husbands bring their half-ton wives twenty pieces of fried chicken and a gallon of mashed potatoes for lunch. I have seen the patients sneak doughnuts and Twinkies into their hospital rooms when they are supposed to be on restricted, liquid diets. I expected a similar treatment from *My 600-lb Life*. After all, the show was airing on TLC, the same network that brought us *My Strange Addiction*, *Sex Sent Me to the ER*, and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*. What I never expected was that *My 600-lb Life* would treat its subjects with respect, tenderness, and something that feels like love.

* * *

In the Connecticut house where I grew up, food was not meant to be eaten, although it could be served. My father sat down to only one meal a day: dinner—and then often ignoring the steak and green beans on his plate in favor of the salad my mother prepared for him each night, with wedges of iceberg lettuce and an entire red onion, sliced thick. My mother smoked Virginia Slims through the meal, often eschewing food altogether and getting her calories instead from the gin and tonic sweating in a cocktail glass inscribed “You Can Never Be Too Rich or Too Thin.” Our family never had dessert, of course, except for once a year: on our birthdays, when my grandmother baked each of us a Betty Crocker spice cake with mocha frosting. Then each of us was allowed one small piece. We ate our cake standing up in the kitchen, each silky bite chewed briefly and then spit into the sink. Whatever remained of the cake was pushed into the disposal and ground up, my mother whispering, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” like a prayer, a benediction.

* * *

The patients in *My 600-lb Life* have dinners with their families too—except, on the show, each patient seems to be at the center of a ring of love and care. The food that is shared is prepared with love, however misguided. Plates are filled with beans and sausages, meatloaf slick with cheese, deep fried wontons, pulled pork whose juices are sopped up with six slices of white bread.

“I cooked how I knew to cook,” one mother tells the camera. Her son James is thirty-seven and weighs nearly seven hundred pounds. His father and his sister have both died of obesity-related causes. “I hope my son is not too bitter at me for that.”

James then looks into the camera. “Sometimes I want to tell my mom just shoot me, just end it now,” he says, his blue eyes filling with tears. “But I could never leave her. I could never let my mom go through another death. I don’t ever want her to be alone like that.”

Of course my family never ate this way. Of course no one in San Francisco, where I live now, eats this way—no one. Bagels are viewed as sinful sources of carbs, half the produce section is devoted to kale, baskets are filled with goji berries and maca and wild-caught salmon. At work in Mill Valley, clients tell me with self-righteous pride that they are “mostly Paleo,” or “eating raw,” or on a “lemon and cayenne cleanse.” All of this makes me feel almost unbearably alone, although in terms of body size I now “pass” for normal. But I am not. I am the furthest thing from normal. I am a lonely, obese monstrosity hiding in plain sight.

As I watch *My 600-lb Life*, alone late at night with all the lights off, watch the dinners served on red-checked oil cloths, watch gravy poured over biscuits, and pizza bubbling with cheese, I too feel something like love, like acceptance. I want to place my body between these rural families and the judgments of the Bay Area hipsters and foodies, the judgments of my WASPy Connecticut family. I want to protect Dr. Nowzaradan’s patients. I want to protect myself.

The documentary shows us a world in which the family table functions as an oasis, a source of peace and comfort and love in the midst of a world that views a “600-lb” person as an aberration, something grotesque. This is what keeps me watching these shows night after night after night—not the amount of food that is eaten, not the amount of grease or salt or calories, but the fact that food is prepared with love and eaten with pleasure. It is like a window into a world I can’t imagine for myself.

* * *

Up until puberty, I could almost pass for normal. My mother dressed me carefully, in slimming navy blue dresses sewn to order by my grandmother, A-line, with buttons running down the center. I was not allowed to wear pants or shorts to school. I was not allowed to swim at the public pool or accompany my family on vacation. When I was twelve, I was sent to fat camp in the Catskills. When I returned home at 110 pounds, my father had left our house and moved into an apartment near his office in Hartford. *Maybe*, I thought to myself, *maybe if I just lost a little more weight, he would come back to us.*

Instead, over the course of the next year, I became a grotesquerie myself, ballooning up to a bloated 250 lbs. before I turned thirteen. I ate anything and everything, sneaking down at night for slice after slice of rye toast with butter, spoonfuls of mint jelly, hot dogs eaten raw, and even dry spaghetti when there was nothing else left. I was so big I was not allowed to ride my sister's pony or sit on our kitchen chairs. I let the boys in my class take me into the woods after school and do anything they wanted to my body; I thought it was the only chance I would ever have in my life to be touched. Once, at a junior high party, a boy asked if any of the girls wanted to outside "for some action." When I volunteered, he reconsidered. "Uh, no thanks," he said. And then, to the other boys at the party, "I didn't mean that much action."

I was too big to fit into the largest size of corduroys at the Levi's store, too big for my riding boots, too big to buy clothes anywhere except the Army Navy surplus store along the highway. My thighs rubbed together when I walked, and there were jagged red stretch marks running down my breasts and across my hips. The whole house shook as I walked across the floor. Worse, as my body grew larger and larger, my voice got smaller and higher, sounding like a chipmunk, a squirrel, a squeaking rat. Eventually I could barely make any sound come out of my lips at all.

Then, one rainy night, our dog got hit by a car. When I found her under my bed, her entire side had been ripped open. Blood had soaked through my carpet. Everyone else was afraid to touch her, so I carried her to the car and held her in my arms as we drove to the vet, watching her pink lungs rise and fall through the gaping wound in her chest wall. The vet met us in the parking lot and took her into his arms from mine. He took her into surgery and tried to close the gaping hole in her chest wall, finally calling us near midnight. She had made it through the operation, he said, but had lost one of her lungs. It would be touch and go for a long time to come.

It was a hard recovery. She had to stay at the vet's hospital for a month. She wouldn't eat the vet's food and was alarmingly thin, her hip bones so sharp they nearly broke through the fragile skin covering her back. Every day after school, I would boil a whole chicken in broth with carrots and celery and then bring the whole pot to her cage. I'd kneel on my dimpled knees next to her shivering body, pull the warm chicken meat from the bone, and feed it to her, handful by handful, letting her lick the broth from my cupped palm. It was the only thing she would eat.

When it was time for her to come home, she needed antibiotic injections twice a day in the muscles of her back legs. This was going to be my job. The doctor had me practice with a syringe and an orange in his back office. He stood behind me, guiding my fingers on the syringe, his hands massive and warm and crisscrossed with black hairs. He smelled clean, like soap, like a shirt fresh from the dryer.

“You have wonderful hands,” he said to me, “steady and kind. You could be a vet, if you wanted to.”

My dimpled, doughy, and repulsive hands were, in the eyes of this kind and skillful man, wonderful. *Steady and kind*, he had said, looking at the same plump fingers and skin shiny from the chicken fat. *I am steady and kind*, I thought to myself. *I am*. I thought of how my hands had pulled the warm chicken meat from the bone and fed it to my injured dog; I thought how she would only eat if the food came from my hands. I thought of how gently she lapped the broth from my palm and how I had helped her to get well. The vet was the first person who showed me a version of my body that was something other than repulsive. He saw another side to me, a capacity for care and healing that was largely obscured by the mountains of flesh under which I moved through the world.

Likewise, Dr. Nowzaradan, with his “morbidly” obese patients, places his surgeon’s hands on the flesh that no other doctor will touch, and sees through to the human being beneath. I was, in a way, born again in that veterinarian’s office, just as Dr. Now’s patients are in his Renaissance Hospital.

I work at an animal hospital now, as a nurse. I am at my best with the most fragile and fractious patients. My hands are still, I hope, steady and kind, and experienced now as well. I feel good with the animals: calm and accepted. My body is, to the uninitiated eye, unremarkable—neither fat nor thin, a size which enables me to move through the world invisibly, safe from judgments about what I eat or how much space I take up in the world. But I am still, at times, living a “600-lb” life, unsure whether I will fit through the door or if the office chair will break when I sit on it.

What a comfort it is to pull the blinds and listen to Dr. Now’s cadenced voice as he talks to his massive patients with quiet respect and love. During one episode, Chuck is not able to reconcile with his angry wife, who leaves him shortly after his surgery, taking their infant son. The scene is heartbreaking and difficult to watch: Chuck weeps and begs her to stay as she zips her suitcase closed and slams the door. We see Chuck left alone on the living room sofa, his massive shoulders heaving with sobs. Weeks later, the camera returns. We watch as Chuck peels off his shirt and wades through the bog behind his house to the clear water beyond, to a pond that is buoyant and cool. He dives under and comes up smiling, then floats on his back. “This feels nice,” he tells us. And as I watch these patients make their way back into the world, as I watch the capacity for love and generosity in the families that care for them, I feel some of the wonder that Chuck must feel as the water caressed his body for the first time.

My own family is around me now, my daughters snug in their beds and the cats purring on my lap. My husband comes up behind me and strokes my hair as the house settles all around us. “This feels nice,” I tell him, and close my computer for the night.

Dolly Reynolds’ work has been published in numerous journals, including *Euphony* (forthcoming), *North American Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *Phoebe*, *Worcester Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Portland Review*, *decomp* and *Gemini Magazine*. She has been twice nominated for a *Pushcart Prize*, and received the *Wilner Award for Short Fiction* from *San Francisco State*.

Wildland Emily Sinclair

It was the second week in September, and bright yellow mums in buckets sat outside the Safeway, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. On impulse, I grabbed a bucket, imagining the flowers on my front porch, a spot of color against the gray hazy air from wildfires twelve miles to the north. As I pushed my cart through the store, two women stopped me to say how beautiful they were, how they wanted them, too. For dinner, I bought colors: red peppers, green acorn squash, yellow carrots.

The fire had started three days before; by the second day, it had grown, uncontained, to more than two thousand acres; by day four, nearly four thousand. The town felt oddly still, its streets empty of the usual cyclists and runners because Routt County had issued air quality warnings. That day, another fire had started in the nearby Flattop mountains to the west. A week before, a different fire to the north. The combination of three fires made the sky a dirty orange brown interpolated by gray and the occasional spot of blue. I am accustomed to Colorado's bright, clear air, but now, our mountains were blue and dreamy, like the Great Smoky Mountains, which have always looked like ideas of mountains to me, rather than the clear, hard, everlasting rock I know. The smell of smoke in early fall was unsettlingly comforting; for me, wood smoke conjures sweaters and conviviality, friends on a hearth, holding glasses of wine.

Wildfires have a particular language, one that sounds like a complicated romance, characterized by seduction and withdrawal. The Deep Creek Fire was a *wildland fire, with grass and brush becoming more receptive to fire*. Firefighters work on *suppression* and *barriers* and *containment* and *structure protection*. They use *direct attack when it is safe to do so* and *indirect strategy*. I used to think of love that way, that heat and destruction had meaning, and protection was imperative.

The Safeway cashier said, "I really like this shampoo you're buying. My hair's so dry and it helps with that." We talked about our hair for a bit, and then I asked her to charge me for two buckets of mums so I could pick up another on my way out. When I got to my car, it was covered in fine specks of white ash, and I looked up to see it falling from the sky, catching the wayward bits of light that made it through the haze.

At home, in my yard, the wildlife were jittery. Birds, whom I imagined to have escaped from smoky points north, tried to land in the grass and peck, but our unsympathetic dog chased them off. It's her nature to protect us, to the point of cruelty to others who do not have her domesticated comforts. Chipmunks squeaked and taunted her. Mule deer glared at me, but continued eating leaves, rather than hustling off the way they usually do in the presence of a person. A lone elk bugled for a mate below the house and then gave up. In the face of danger, wild creatures try to do what they are supposed to, eat and mate. I poured a glass of tequila and watched the night grow prematurely dark.

The news was reporting landfall of hurricane Irma in the Caribbean. Death tolls were coming in. Irma, the news reported, was now twice the size of Colorado. The governor of Florida said, "If you don't leave now, we cannot save you." I felt ashamed that I wanted a cigarette, the comfort of fire in a fire.

In the West, we live among our rocks and trees, our river canyons, our green haying fields, and our irreducible mountains. And then the skies send a brief bolt of lightning down. The trees are majestic in their final, fiery moments, growing beyond themselves. Their ashes rise and are carried on the winds and come to those of us just beyond the disaster, bringing us the bits of a place we never saw, after it's too late to see it as it was.

Emily Sinclair lives in Golden, Colorado. She received her AB in English and History from Columbia University and her MFA in Fiction from the Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Her stories and essays have been published in Colorado Review, The Normal School, Empty Mirror, MonkeyBicycle, Third Coast, Crab Creek Review, and elsewhere. Her work has been recognized by Best American Essays 2012. She teaches at Lighthouse Writers in Denver. She tweets @SemiEmily.

Schoolhouse Prophecies Amanda Hays

When I was sixteen, my house caught fire. Lightning stabbed a pin-sized hole in a pipe in my closet. As my mom backed the SUV out of the garage, our two bichon frises pressing their snouts against the passenger side window, I sprinted back inside the house. I ran like I'd never run before, like my brother and I had never been allowed to run inside the house as kids. My tennis shoes slapped the tile. The lights were off. I didn't know where my dad was, but he wasn't in the car.

I took the stairs two at a time. Smoke sifted down through the ceiling, hanging in the air like moisture. I darted into my bedroom and snatched my stuffed bison from the bed, tearing down the stairs holding Leroy by one leg. My heart felt loud inside my body, like when the drums in marching bands pass by you too close and for a second you feel the beat in your gut and your throat.

I landed hard at the base of the stairs, my feet taking the impact hard. The smoke alarms weren't going off yet. My father saw me standing there, brown stuffed animal in hand, wearing a University of Kansas T-shirt. The house was dark, like we'd yet to turn the lights on after just coming home. The front door was open and tiny smatterings of rain pebbled the windows and pavement, humidity seeping through the doorframe.

"What the hell are you doing?" my dad asked. His arms were full of photo albums—on top were the cloth baby books, mine a Grandma floral print, my brother's a timid striped blue.

"Getting Leroy!" I said, sliding through the front door and jogging across the driveway to where my mother had parked the car against the curb.

State Farm arrived at the house early the next morning, and within an hour, people were flitting in and out of the house, wearing uniforms from various companies. The claims adjuster declared the event a 75% loss. Someone handed me a plastic yellow hardhat and thick rubber boots.

We surfed on wet mounds of drywall, pink and yellow insulation, tiny bits and pieces of things I couldn't identify. My bedroom was a jungle of wires. I could see the sky through a hole in my closet. The smell of moist electrical campfire pressed itself inside my nostrils and it wasn't the kind of smell you got used to. My brother wasn't present to go through his own belongings, which were submerged under a sea of insulation and debris. He couldn't see his pastel globe or the plastic toy mat, a winding cityscape for Hot Wheels cars, which we used to lay across the carpet in his bedroom when we were kids. The fire had chomped a jagged hole in the corner of the mat.

I held the banister as I walked down the stairs, something I never did. I clomped past people ripping up sopping carpet and dripping drywall. My mother handed me her cell phone and I pressed it to my ear, feeling detached from myself.

"Hi, Amanda," my brother said. It was September, and he was at his freshman year of college at the University of Kansas. I thought of his bedroom, of the debris piled high on his desk, on his solar system bedspread, the yellow insulation that looked like the cubed pit we used to jump in at

gymnastics parties when we were little kids. I thought of the half melted plastic tubs on the top shelf of his closet, full of Hot Wheels cars and green army men and multicolored blocks.

I didn't want to say the word *gone*. My eyes swam in their sockets, and I made eye contact with a tall bearded man carrying a coil of carpet across the tile, dribbling water out of its end like a taco.

Within a year of the fire, my brother would have his first emotional breakdown at KU. I was taking a psychology class at the time, but I never learned anything that could help me with him. Saving Leroy was easy. I didn't know how to save my brother. I remember the phone call I had with him, after the fire, how my mother, who'd spoken to him first, told him about all the people in the house, her voice steady, calm, matter-of-fact.

I don't remember what we talked about on the phone the day of the fire, but I remember he didn't seem upset. He said something about how he wasn't surprised, and I wasn't sure what he meant by that. I remember all the school days in which we talked about house fires and fire safety, what we would run into our houses and retrieve. Maybe the school system made our words into prophecies, even when I was sixteen and too old to be sentimental about a stuffed animal.

Robbed of the opportunity to gather his own school-sanctioned item, my brother probably crumbled into himself, his mental illness jumpstarting on the fuel of loss created by the fire. I wonder if he thought the word *gone* when he heard the news, if he pictured a pile of charred rubble, bits of foundation, maybe one solitary wall still standing. I visualize him hanging up the phone the day of the fire, sinking into the wooden dorm chair, trying to find a way to reconcile an extinguished childhood. Maybe he burnt himself up with the ensuing loss of childhood artifacts, of blue childhood paint on the walls and the grief-filled realization that he'd seen the house so many times, and yet he'd failed to really look at it. Now it was gone, torn down to the studs.

Aphasia-Colored Crayon *Zebulon Husset*

The mystery crayon confounded him. Not because he couldn't discern its color, clearly it was a white crayon with chips of other wax flecked into its cylindrical structure—he reasoned that the factory came up with the idea when cleaning the caked accumulation of splashed wax from their crayon molds.

He'd learned about crayon molds from his favorite show, the one that showed how everything was made. His mom didn't think he understood it, but he made the noise when she changed the channel so she let him watch. "It's educational, how bad can that be?" she asked her friend, from the cuspland of anxiety and breakdown.

What piqued him about the mystery crayon was when he drew a picture it came out all wrong. The white left his lines splotchy or missing altogether. When his counselor handed him the pack of mystery crayons she said it would be like the etching they had done the month before and he was frustrated that it wasn't at all. There, he'd colored a picture of a boat on a lake with trees on the shoreline and a two-propeller plane with a Lycoming 4-cylinder engine and he had been frustrated when she said "Pretty birdie," as she took the drawing to add the black erasable crayon layer over it.

But this crayon's effect wasn't like that at all. With the etching his pictures still made sense. Sure, the lines were multicolored, but when he scratched a grandfather clock into the flat black surface it still looked like the grandfather clock he'd seen assembled on his show. And in addition to that, he knew if he scratched the entire surface free of blackness—as he would a few days later—his lake and Cessna and boat were there plain as day. When he covered the page with the mystery crayon it was a mess of dots and streaks. A *mess*. And when he carefully drew a hot air balloon and its basket it came out like a window on a rainy day. Just more drips repainting the opaque plane.

He hadn't thought of that crayon for decades until he sat in the hospice looking out the window at their pond and ducks and listened intently to the nurse explaining the condition Aphasia to his intent daughter in the adjacent chair. "He is still in there, but when his brain tries to make his mouth speak, instead of what he means to say, unrelated words come out." "I am speaking fine, it's you who can't understand," he told them. His daughter laid her hand on his arm, her face softened like she was looking at a wounded dog.

"Duck chair, window duck-duck?" She asked the nurse. *The nurse*, he thought to himself, and not him. Nonsense talk. "I'm fine," he said. His daughter's thumb gently rubbed the loose skin of his forearm. "Crayon?" "It's normal for cases like his," the nurse said, opening a second, much thicker folder.

Zebulon Husset is a writer and photographer living in San Diego. His writing has recently appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Meridian*, *North American Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *The Portland Review*, *The Maine Review* and *The Roanoke Review* among others. He publishes a writing prompt blog (*Notebooking Daily*) and his flash fiction submission guide was reposted at *The Review Review*.

Fight, Hate, DGAF *Julia Dixon Evans*

It's more of a concrete basement than any sort of den but it's not like we're gonna plan any revolutions when we're comfortable, and that's a direct quote from Levi Randolph Robinson III, aka Lev, and everyone takes everything he says as gospel because god damn it, he's always right.

"Ivy," Josh whispers next to me. It's our first time here. I don't want anyone (especially Lev) seeing anyone whispering to me, much less Josh. "Look at this tweet."

I put one finger in the air, not turning my head. Lev is showing us a map painter-taped to the concrete wall, following strings where this march will coincide with the city council meeting. There are strings attached to pins and I imagine it took a long time to set the pins against the concrete and then tie on the strings. It just seems a bit Hollywood for us revolutionaries. A sharpie would have worked. Or spray paint maybe. A woman my mother's age nods her head and murmurs "Mmhm." The revolution will be EVANS motherized, I think, and I stifle a laugh that turns into a cough that turns into a coughing fit and everyone is watching me. The mom gives me a paper cup of coffee, not sure if it's hers or a fresh one, and she's just so motherly that I feel compelled to sip.

That night, I lie next to Josh and watch him scrolling through Pinterest with the iPad propped up on his gut. He's looking at bougie protest signs, but I think I'm more annoyed by way his finger flicks at the screen to scroll. I try to think like a scientist: how many annoyances of each caliber category (current system: eye roll, fight, hate) will I need to measure and in what period of time before divorce is triggered? Too many variables. I need a control. I need control.

"I don't want to go back there," Josh says.

"What?" I sit up on my elbows.

"I just think I could do more effective things with my time. I think we could both do more effective things with our time."

"Like what? Make a Pinterest board?"

"I mean, like, we can go to the marches and stuff, but they don't need us to organize with them. We can spend the hours of those meetings calling reps and writing letters or articles or something."

Eye roll, fight, hate? Lab notes: new category: DGAF.

"Whatever," I say. It comes out completely non-bitchy so I add, "Those signs are dumb."

I wake up in the middle of the night and hear Josh jerking off in the adjacent bathroom. I place a hand over my belly button. He hasn't touched me in months. My revolution will not be motherized.

Eye roll, fight, hate, DGAF? Lab notes: new category: I will never be happy.

Josh never decided on a poster design so we show up to the march as the only people without witty signs, including the people who made witty signs that are self-aware of how

insufferable the sign game has become. I walk as close to Lev as I can, and he's wearing this dark green jacket with shiny gold epaulettes and it looks real sixties. His sign just has their insta handle which I respect as non-witty. The revolution will be utilitarian.

"It's Ivy, right?" he asks.

"Hi, yeah."

"It's a beautiful day to chip away at the machine," he says.

"The revolution will wear sunscreen," I say.

Lev laughs, and I've never felt more powerful. Josh doesn't laugh. Eye roll, fight, hate, DGAF. Lab notes: new category: get away from me.

That night I don't think about the protest, or the march, or the revolution, or even Lev's shiny golden buttons on his shoulders. I think about how all the new categories are diluting my table and the overall effect is nudging the data further away from the empirical trigger of divorce.

My phone rings. No caller ID. I answer because it's easier than dealing with a voicemail and the accumulation of guilt with each day I don't call someone back.

"Ivy, it's Blake," my sister says.

"Yeah," I say, not wanting to talk to her but it's not like I can hang up now.

"I need you to bail me out," she says. "Not like, figuratively. Can you come down and get me out of the slammer."

"Oh my god," I say. Who calls it the slammer when they're in the slammer?

"I got arrested for possession at this, like, after party after the protest."

"You were at the protest?"

"Nah, just the party."

The revolution will be stoned.

I'd wanted to pick a good divorce-worthy fight with Josh tonight but now my sister is here, staying on the couch. Josh is making a midnight snack in the kitchen and making way too much mess and eye roll/fight/hate/DGAF/get away from me? Hate.

I'd wanted to be a mother one day but not with someone I can't look at when he makes vegan nachos.

I'd wanted to change the world.

I go to the next meeting alone. I sit by the mom and sip my own paper cup of coffee. Lev is angry about the police bust, he's angry about the party, he's angry about the city council vote, he's angry at all of their witty signs. I don't think he has the social capital for them to fear him but he's trying. The mom drains her cup and plays with the rim until it unrolls into a moistened paper furl. I drain my cup too, in one large swallow that hurts my throat.

The revolution will be inside me.

Julia Dixon Evans is author of the novel *HOW TO SET YOURSELF ON FIRE*, forthcoming in May from Dzanc Books. Her work can be found in *The Fanzine*, *Paper Darts*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Barrelhouse*, and elsewhere. She is an editor and program director for the literary nonprofit and small press *So Say We All* in San Diego. More at www.juliadixonevans.com or on Twitter @juliadixonevans.