

Elegy to a goldfish

I can't remember when
 my brother and I decided to kill you, small
 fish with no school, bright and happy at the bottom
 slipping through the gate
 of your fake castle. I think it was winter. A part of us
 aware of the death outside, the leaves
 being burned up and the squirrels starving
 inside the oaks, the sky
 knocking its clouds into the ashtray of the city.
 And it might have been me
 who picked you up first, who
 chased you around the clean bowl of your life
 and brought you up into the suffocating
 elevator of ours. And I want to say it was my brother
 who threw you against the wall
 like a drunk husband, the glow-worm inch of you
 sliding down the English Garden
 of wallpaper, and that it was me who raised my leg
 like a dog, me who brought my bare foot
 slamming down on your almost nothing ribs
 and felt you smear like a pimple. Now that's something
 I get to have forever. That Halloween-candy-
 sized rage, that cough drop
 of meanness. And your death, only
 the beginning, the mushy orange autopsy
 reminded us of mandarins, Navels, bloods, Persians
 the sweet Valencia. And when our sister
 who must have thought of you all day
 came home to find the bowl
 empty, looked at us, my brother and me
 I remember we started to laugh. And then
 it might have been me
 though it could have been him, who thought to open
 the can of tangerines, who pulled
 one of the orange bodies out of the syrup, and threw it at her
 this new artificial you, chasing her around the house
 screaming Eat him! Eat him!
 but it was me who held her down on her bed
 and him who forced
 her mouth open, and it was me who pushed
 the sticky fruit into her throat
 like a bloody foot
 into a sock. You had only been gone for one hour
 and yet the sky outside
 turned black and red, the tree in the yard thrashed back
 and forth until its spinal cord
 broke, and my little sister, your one love, flashed white
 and pulsed like neon
 in a hospital, her eyes
 rolling back into the aquarium of her head
 for a moment, and in every country
 countless deaths, but none as important
 as yours, tiny Christ, machine of hope, martyr of girls and boys.



Matthew Dickman

Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, Vt, USA.
dickmanmatthew@yahoo.com

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