

# Oklahoma r e v i e w

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## Us

by Jenn Habel

The counselor I made him see  
made him remember the black garbage  
bags in which he packed his things  
to visit the father he'd made himself forget.  
He can't argue when I say it wasn't fair,  
nor can I when he says that was a long time ago.  
Most nights it's like this: The wounded's  
ability to forgive? The problem of evil?  
The likelihood of our getting out of debt?  
I turn over cards from my deck marked Truth  
and he counters with those of his named Hope  
while on our plates the remaining sauce congeals.  
Tonight, though, we're putting all that aside  
to make sushi; we've got it all planned out:  
I'll mix vinegar into the hot rice with my paddle  
as he fans it to room temperature from above.  
According to the instructions we've read,  
it's almost impossible to achieve the desired  
consistency without a helper.

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## **Allow Me to Introduce My Bad Side**

by Jenn Habel

Don't tell me about the stars,  
about how on a black clear night  
you go out to the field and lie  
under them, the riotous sounds  
of crickets and bullfrogs as you  
take in those bright pricks of light  
meaning to you peace. Don't say  
how the memory of them lingers,  
a boarding pass you keep nestled  
in your shirt's pocket for a train  
that once bore you, that you believe  
will bear you again, to those stops  
called Perspective and Renewal.  
Nor do I want to hear any more  
about that other place you call  
The Present, sweet and simple as  
a single bell's note, where you say  
we can go and where it does not  
matter what our fathers did and  
we can forget how we stopped being  
willing to give ourselves to them  
in order to feel hate each time  
they stake their claims. And please,  
I beg you, keep to yourself what  
you persist in knowing about us  
at our cores, that despite the thick  
stench we've made—some of us,  
you'll remind me—and breathe,  
we are, at root, most of us, Good.

There are boys asleep on benches  
with their backs gashed open,  
girls more beautiful than you or I  
ever were who will spend their  
todays releasing thirty men's  
semen. I drank too much wine  
again last night. Soon I'll bury  
my parents. I am getting old.

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