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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