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Summer

Barefoot on the gas pedal,
sand still between my toes,
driving us back to your mom's rental.

There's a midnight show in P-Town,
The Harder They Come,
but that's for later.

For now it's me
waiting on the bed
watching your top come off
and then, with some effort,
the still-wet bottoms –
sticking a bit to salty skin –
finally revealing your sand-striped ass

so white

in its frame of dark hips and thighs,
still ocean-cold to my touch.

Throwing Away Your Sex Toys

You're approaching an age
when you need to consider
what will be found
when the children start cleaning up
for the estate sale that will fatten their wallets:
 the furniture and books
 and closets full of clothes,
 the cheap posters left over from college hanging in expensive frames,
 a kitchen full of pots and pans,
 two Cuisinarts (large and small),
 a blender that never worked to your satisfaction,
 and there,
 beside the bed,
 in a drawer conveniently close at hand,
 appliances of a different sort,
 to blend and stroke and knead you with pleasure.

A trip to the trash,
now,
would make so much sense.
No shooing away of the grandchildren
while the messy disposals are made;
you doing what needs to be done
while you still can.

But, on the other hand,
perhaps it's a bit too soon,
even now,
at this late date,
to give this up:
 an afternoon in bed,
 alone,
 or with your spent husband (old grandpa) close by,
 leafy shadows on the wall,
 inhalation after inhalation
 leading to an age-defying
 exhalation
 of release, of wetness, of life,
 a breath that exclaims that it's not quite time,
 not yet,
 even if it means
 embarrassing the children
 conceived between
 your sex-soaked sheets.

The Hospital Where I'll Probably Die

It's just a couple of blocks away.
Convenient.
A short ambulance ride from my home.
A blessing to my neighbors,
The ones who will tentatively emerge
When they wheel me out in a stretcher.

"Is he ok?"
"What happened?"
"I just saw him watering the garden the other day."

It's a good hospital.
Modern.
Earnest young doctors.
But there's only so much to be done
When you reach a certain age,
When you enter this world alive.

The directive says no extraordinary measures.
So they'll wait.
By my bed.
My grieving wife.
(Did she avoid this trip before me?)
The kids.
(The ones who could make it there in time.)

Each breath will come slowly,
My tongue sticking out like a lizard's,
Till the time between inhale and exhale
Becomes my new eternity.

It's a comfort,
Knowing my end will occur
Such a short distance away,
So close to the park
With its slides and its swings,
And my grandson calling to me:
"Higher! Higher!"

Liberty's Back

If I were only half as brave as you,
to leave the graves of your ancestors untended,
their limestone names blurred by autumn rains,
finally used as pavers for the muddied boots
of those who hated them.

What gave you the courage
to leave language and home behind,
to sail into that grainy black-and-white harbor
 of steamships
 and tugboats
 and gray granite skyscrapers
 and an upraised torch that greeted you with comfort?

I can use your voice now.
Tell me, is it time for me
to run that faded film in reverse,
to glance up at Lady Liberty's back
as I slip past the remnants of your dreams?

Tell me.

Separation

The head lopped off,
the body teeters,
then falls to the ground,
its master gone,
no longer there
to shout commands:
Stand,
Walk,
Run,
Touch,
Stop,
Kneel.

And the head,
with no body,
will the lungs be missed?
Will it feel like drowning,
drowning in a sea of air,
drowning as it falls
to rest by its lost companion?