

## Horizontal Experiences

**I'm always right.**

I never listen  
to their words and yours  
are sweeter with each degree  
rising to leave  
the crowd you daunt  
in the dark  
searching for something  
that was familiar in  
lamplight but  
the pitch plays  
a sick Brechtian  
joke  
like your bad puns  
and those references to  
programs I never  
watched the way your  
face changes when I  
pay too much  
or not enough  
attention my dear  
I won't be held in  
your mind as some  
muse that occupies  
your seconds when  
I know that I don't  
want you  
letting anyone ride in your  
passenger seat except for  
me and  
any attempt to control the  
radio  
is futile.

## Horizontal Experiences

### **Cindy and the Prince**

She thought that sixteen years was enough of childhood,  
quite enough of little girl frocks and long plaits,  
advertisements of innocence,  
those glaring “do not enter” signs to that intriguing, rougher sex;  
the kind that courted her stepsisters’ money with flowers, and chocolate,  
and whispered sweet nothings that “annoying little Cindy” strained to hear,  
while hidden in the hallway in printed flannels and bare feet.

When she shivered outside of a club in a borrowed mini skirt,  
the bouncer waved her in, ignoring her bad fake,  
lipstick a shade too dark, heels a half size too big.  
The bartender knew a minor when he saw one,  
so her drink was weak but for the taste  
of hormones and fear, and Cindy in disguise  
already reeked of cigarettes.

A pink drink, long legs, and nerves,  
could always catch the eye of a midnight prince  
with enough cash for lightweight wooing and  
enough charm for sixteen. Anyway,  
all she could see in the dark was shiny white teeth  
and the shadows of cheekbones,  
when he drew her close.

Those tiny glasses of clear liquid, so deceptive,  
they felt like nothing on the way down,  
until the room started to spin and ‘Cinderella,’  
as she introduced herself, could hardly tell  
if the colors of the world weren’t swirling together.  
She might’ve been dreaming the hands that gripped her hips,  
or the stubble scraping her chin,  
or the tongue that wasn’t hers.

Last call is at 3AM,  
and someone put Cindy in a cab, but not the Prince,  
who she lost at about the time he calculated her fare in his head.  
A driver with pity, a real fairy godmother,  
told her to take care of herself, and took no money,  
but she forgot her shoes, one heel broken clean off,  
in the back of that rare tidy taxi.

## Horizontal Experiences

### **Einstein Called it Insanity**

The girl's eyes wander from the book's crisp white leaves,  
Page one, page two, page six, page twelve.  
"You need more on your walls," the married man said.  
But he was looking at her eyes instead,  
and she almost forgot his ring, again.

Tea on teeth and dry cereal half eaten,  
The scratch and the sting might rouse one proper reaction.  
Pillows sag with hurt feelings, her breakfast is growing stale,  
and a new binding bends the wrong way,  
the type facedown on a cold mattress.

The window's scene is brittle brown grass and naked trees,  
Because the birds don't come by anymore.  
Mountains of straining dishes overtake the counter  
with washed cups drying upside down.  
They're disoriented, but everything drains easier that way.

Every drawer stands ajar so as not to keep secrets,  
the laundry basket is full of her week's memories unwashed.  
"You never clean for me," the last love once said,  
scrutinizing the maze of obscure books on the floor  
and towers of used mugs on the desk.  
She treasures the mess, like an extension of her thoughts,  
but he never liked her chaos.

Her toes curl on cold tile, away from the grime,  
Tiny fine hairs on her stomach stand up and away.  
Rumbling, spitting, chilling, scalding,  
the moody showerhead will not commit to a temperature,  
but at least her hair is clean.

"I can't believe this is happening," the naïve boy said,  
entangled in her legs and his hands in her hair,  
in the bed that's too small for two,  
but she can.  
And the end is real too, when it comes.  
She'll remember what she needs,  
or he'll remember what he wants.  
Never the twain shall meet.

### **Power Play**

## Horizontal Experiences

“I want to go out,”  
articulated her foot stomping the floor,  
and I agreed to go, and follow her about,  
as she’d indulged me so many times before

when I was bent  
on making two wrongs melt into a right  
for the sake of my hurt pride, or my heart again rent,  
craving the band aid of a misguided, intoxicated night.

Wouldn’t you know,  
I never paid for a drop, thanks to my charge,  
who befriended older men with money to blow,  
with her eyes too sparkling and her smile too large.

I could tell early on  
that his interest was growing, the way his lips grazed my ear,  
the bar wasn’t that loud. I was not going to fawn,  
though his accent seduced me the minute he was near

Enough for me to catch the words,  
as it reminded me of a place I’ve missed.  
This is where the picture and the narrative blurred,  
into every drag on a cigarette, and every time we kissed.

It’s been a long time,  
since too many drinks and no name boys  
were the point of the nights I’m  
hesitant to remember, with all those ploys

I was eager to swallow.  
He was soberly chosen, and I’d choose him again,  
to grasp in the alley and give directions to follow  
back to my place, when there was nothing left to feign.

Fear caught in my chest,  
with the image of my own face in the mirror,  
makeup cried off after the escape of a guest,  
and my therapist’s piercing eyes, their message had never been clearer.

In any case, he called me  
gorgeous, and I let him, wanting him to succeed.  
With power to the tip of my ponytail, he was who I let him be;  
that night became all about want, and not about need.

## Late for Departure

## Horizontal Experiences

The sweetest memory is  
your shattered face;  
under eye trenches and cracked lips that gave way  
to a sandpaper tongue.

Flat bleary eyes,  
fumbling sleep deprived hands,  
and still there could be no better company.

Simple syllables sound best on your tongue, but  
the inches between those desperate fingertips  
grows exponentially.

Our soul fragments fit together,  
So I hope you don't forget.