

Sine

A white line, across the cement, under the park, through the door, faint and hardly there, to its red center.

Pith

When he checked the door that last time, it was open, malice leaking free like dry heat. Yes? he called and rattled the ring of keys at his hip. No, came the answer, the voice not unlike his lover, his mother, a wounded horse.

Thrift

Her face fresh from the barber was small and fragile, a bulb of milk ready to be broken. It's irresponsible, he said. You can't throw money after love. But the room was in her eyes and all the street outside.

Interruption

Afterward, her eyes started sharding the light, the view from the front door a modern cathedral. That dog is 47 types of brown, she told her husband. His forehead broke into 21 worries, though perhaps he only studied the faultless ceiling.

St. Sebastian's

His foot had ached for months, a slow stab, heartbroken pain. There's nothing wrong with it, said the doctor. The remorse of a red handkerchief stuck from his lab coat pocket. Of course, that doesn't make it unreal. He thanked the doctor and went to the park, the low bubble of children, the pale, beatific mothers.

Pike

The bridge was broken, just a causeway for squirrels, though underneath girls made promises to boys. She pointed them out, named them by their best feature--hair or eyes or breasts. A year ago, this time on open water, he'd named her too.

The Willful Child

Her doctor told her it was the bite of a brown recluse, the dime-sized wound on her palm. She believed this, knowing that if there were a god, he'd come to her as a spider. Of course, she knew there wasn't, and as the wound deepened and went purple, her heart refused to give it blood. She lay gaping on the bathroom floor, her hand the look of dead roses, her body an excitement of shudders. Help me, she told her father through the telephone, I'm sorry for everything I've done.

The Gossipers

The red sweater of her sat with cups empty. Do you want him? said her friend. No, she answered. Just his voice. He, not so far away, spoke. In this way, they invented a machine, her gilt wheels, his explosions. It ran into the night, across several years. Friends regarded it with amusement and teeth. He sat with the red sweater of her. The sun beside you, he said. I know, she answered. Who would invent stories against them?

Exegesis

She sat flipping among his book, fingers glasslike on the pages. Funny then when she was cut, spattering blood on the girls' varsity squad. Have a great summer! it said, arrow inked up the center's skirt.

Biography

There is a price. It's on the back. If you turn it around you'll see. It isn't expensive. Everything's okay.

Epistemology

He took her by the throat and squeezed. Motels, he said, they make me murder. She pushed him away and stepped onto the lawn. Lightning bugs lifted and fell, trucks on the highway busting the night. Shall we marry? she said, twirling her skirts. It was impossible to understand, the humid cloud of words.

Eleven

As she read essays, she plaited one side of her hair. You'd last forever, he said, up from his puzzle. The green light of some vehicle tracked across the ceiling.

Argot

The mice fought in the ceiling, squealing in rage. Sure it's not rats? he said. She plodded through her novel. Rats would sound like cats. Cats like elephants. The rain in its waves seemed white and holy.

Valentine

There seemed to be impossible things, crossing the sidewalk, adjusting the birds, the smoke from a concrete pipe. He had a valve that was wrong, perched whitely among the viscera. He tried small and smaller tries.

A Brace Is Not A Couple

At the back of the store, beneath shelves of porcelain cats, were bags of confetti. Some look like guts, she said, and red spaghetti. He wouldn't make the obvious rhyme, though he saw through her eyes the rising birds.

10 Thousand Things

The man moved over the city like a small dog, heedful in scent and strikingly gray. With each step his palms signified old men and children, their stoops, held at the center level of circulation.

Oglala

If I were to die.... she said. She left it at that, measuring the table with her arm, ribs to fingertip. He considered that future: like tall grass never stopping waving.

Lease

The wall had 4 switches in some arrangement of off and on, a single light. Click! she said. From the dark, she laughed. Click! she said again, but there was just black, in some arrangement of silver.

We Need Supper

They tried force, one then another. I work, said one. Sex, joked a second. A certain movie, the third. The women at the other tables were like starlight, blue and keen, out of reach. The space among them, over the hot sauce and napkin pile, was the only true thing. Lonely, it said and, Why do we want? The men had no choice but to confront their silverware, the jabbing at and eating of small, masked admission. The evening wore on. Perhaps there was time. They needed some way out, through the jaws of their coffee cups or the last lowering of hands.

Manifest

She crowded it, hawking its colors, lengths. It's awful. How bad it is is tragic. It was a tower of cups and strings, motherboard, throat of a large bird. He stood in the ozone of her disgust. He took her mouth, kissed it, held it.

Menlo Park

He gave her the light bulb, the glass gone pink over the years. I can drop it? she said. He nodded, and she held her hand from the window, the traffic moving stories below.

On Not To See A Bird

The noodles boil to paste, blacken, catch fire. She comes home and throws the pot into the snow, a hissing startled crow. Upstairs, she finds him asleep, eyes clenched to the plumes of acrid smoke. She slides beside him, has dreams—acres of corn-stalk, winter rag—pinioned by the wing of his arm.

Where The Woods Is Darkest

The film maker forgets his camera. He goes to the river instead, ice sliding by in blue sheets. On one is a man cooking over a pale fire. Hey, says the man, sliding by. By the time this melts, I'll be in warmer parts. The film maker sells his camera. He makes out for the desert, writing poems like sun under static.

A Wish

A pebble sank for 3 days through 3 miles of water. It passed between the skeleton of a whale, in which a school of orange fish lived. When it reached the bottom, it wouldn't move again, missing terribly the sailor's hand.

Easter Rabbit

Can you save me? Yes. Put your head down. I'm afraid it'll hurt. It will. No one wants it.

Occupation

She said, You look thin.

To what question she addressed, he—his red sweater on the bright day—couldn't guess.