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Category: Poetry

False Patrol

False Patrol

1

The lakes rusted over. I did not drip
from inside myself, no—you licked
two fingers. I tipped back
and then the fluorescent lights clicked
on and we flushed rubber down,
watched it circle like a half-baby
in an Arby's bathroom. You would drown
if you tried to swim out here, maybe, but
I could flash my breasts at any old boat
and they might slow in the marsh. That
is the difference between us, a vote
of confidence. When filling out our ballots
we argued over a proposition that would drop
wolves in the wild; you wanted to stop their landing.

2

I wanted wolves to land and prowl and eat
wooly creatures and so I voted yes, yes for
the sad rancher, his gun on his back. A bleak
bleat. Out in the open like an animal, I undress
and feel voted for. It is hunting season here
and we are dangerously low on vested orange. I want
to be mistaken for a doe, a wolf. In lights we stand like deer:
unaware, babyish. I think I see a bear and it is just a gaunt
skunk. A badger, maybe. I make you stand in front
and it scuttles away, and you make fun of me for being
afraid. I am more afraid of the lights, which I hunt
out every time we lie down, certain I am seeing
them move toward us, an army of blunt brights.
You claim that they have stayed still this whole
time. I shut my eyes and agree: *Yes, a false patrol.*

3

I shut my eyes and agree with you when you say
We are so much kinder than your friends. You
do not know I am the worst of them. One day a week
we all eat exorbitant amounts of pork fried rice, egg foo

young, fortune cookies with numbers listed on the back
in red ink. After you leave, my friends sit and stare at me,
expectant. Your small back lifts, disappears over the dirt tracks
and I say to them *The difference between us is that I am free
to be open, and choose not to be.* With you, I choose to open
my mouth and say nothing. My friends try, at least, to pick
apart their own vocal cords. To wet their tongues, to redden
dry skin. Your hands are red, too, but because you stick
into nails, shrug your paintings onto them. I painted your nails
a smooth, wet black; somehow the moons haven't paled.

4

Somehow your polish hasn't paled, yet. I tell a story
about a girl picking a fight for fun and laugh and you
don't. When you leave, my friend looks at me all blurry
and says *He knows nothing about you.* This is untrue,
I hope. I tell you I am scared of thunder like a dog
and it is as if a tail tucks underneath my legs, I am
ashamed. I have been blood-dry for months, in a smog
of clean underness. You have been drink-dry too damn long,
about the same as me. I do not tell you about my lack
of blood. Instead I say *I want to make sure my tear ducts still
work,* and so watch Good Will Hunting, lean back
with focus, try to make water come. I do not try to till
blood from inside me. We force warmth to sprout out
of pruno, but read: bad-soaked fruit can kill. I do not doubt this.

5

I do not doubt that important people soaking
in tubs are warm inside. I am talking about the vice
president's son, the video you showed me, a woman stroking
him between her feet. The video I forced you to find, twice,
once just to see if you could, and once to see it really,
in its orange, low-lighted glory. The video where he
leans back, lights a pipe. Where her feet slip on his domed belly,
where he holds up a camera, not knowing he is an animal detainee
of our camera's lightbox, the true watchers, the real feed.
I did not care if the video was real, if the photos
of cigarettes dangling out of his tan mouth and weed
ashes pooling into the lukewarm bath were composed
by Ukranian agents. I hoped he was warm inside. I told you
Really, we all want to be watched To lie still, to be peered into.

6

I peered into your still mouth, at that small tooth on the side
with the sulfur discoloring. The one you brush at three times
a day, like it's just a stamp that can fade with dioxide
and not bone itself. Before we kissed, you said enzymes
ruptured in that tooth's calcium when you were born. Or something
like that. Really, you were trying to tell me that you weren't
dirty. Or diseased. Or dying. I said that amount of brushing
sounded real tiring on the arms. To be transparent,
all my teeth are yellow and there are no birth
defects to blame. Coffee, a culprit. Summers

where days press into each other. A hot day on Earth
pasted by mint—too obvious. I stared at the colors
of your pointed wolftooth, touched your drying lip.
The lakes rusted over; nothing inside of me dripped.