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"Asteroid," "Sifting," "Sublimation" and "Südtirol" (poems)

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Award Name: Ryan Chighizola Prize

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Asteroid

Lauren Burgess

Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner

Asteroid why don't you come down from there?
I grow bored easily. "I confess I have no inner resources,"
other than the dictionary shoved in my purse, but you like that.
It is so human.

Asteroid you know that the nature of my life, a word,
goes soberly toward night like a skunk with an itch.
Your gravity is greater than a conversation about Lowell. The seas feel your weight.
I need your grazing occultation, how you reach the sudden limit of scopes
and disappear. Asteroid, are you here?
Do you like the look of Boston?

Asteroid you are a pompous potato,
throwing yourself across the sky with glee in circuits
while I'm looking for something to crawl inside of and die.
Maybe I need something to love me back.
Asteroid does this feel like love?
Can you see my pores the way I see your craters through a Barlowe?
I haven't washed in days, Vesta, maybe you need glasses.
Clean me up with your metals and show me God.
Asteroid show me God in my father's face,
show me God the way little boys are shown breasts.
I know you love me; shit on the Garden. Shit on polygenesis theories,
on the islands of trash in the Pacific, on the internalized ideology that carved me "woman."
We hate them. We made them.
Asteroid, you are woman. You are woman in poodle skirt learning double-dutch.
You are woman creating dutch oven. You are woman with your head in an oven.
With our heads in the oven, we are woman.

O lovechild! O big cunt on the town! These and I unapologetically:
Asteroid help us change a tire.
Asteroid send a meteorite to relieve Trump's scalp.
Asteroid come walk the park with me.
Asteroid Marx was right, I'm not sorry.
Asteroid do you have any spare change? The firefighters wanted me to ask.
Water is scarce, family planning is all the rage, and as for smiling: there is no money in it.
Gas prices set the Middle East on fire, and as I said,
water is scarce. Masks are mandatory for Chinese children on the playground,
masks are mandatory for conversations with family over green beans and ham.
I haven't talked to my mother since she died.
Inevitability is the beauty of this.
Anticipation is the root and the spring of this, that feeling of upcoming roadkill--
then it's gone: mom in the supermarket.
What is your core of?

And if you're still searching, Asteroid there is a God,
and he stands next to a port-o-potty with double-cupped palms.

Sifting

Lauren Burgess

Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner

Missing you is problematic
because we're on the couch.
The room smells warm
like someone's been sleeping.
Dust plays lazy
in the sunbeams.

You sleep like a corpse
on the road, flailed.
And look handsome
without your glasses.

I never want a song
with lyrics, I say. I want
to please you but
the twelve string's
on your lap.

A breath shivers
down the chimney,
and I stop reading.
In my head,

You
spread out

like scent.

Please, I say. Let this hang
with our jackets, bear.
Don't leave us just yet.

Vibrations in the kitchen
remind you of the orchids,
wilted there.

I think about getting to the store for apples
before it fogs.
You look off.

Sublimation

Lauren Burgess

Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner

Inspired by Richard Siken's "Scheherazade"

Take me to a place where the bodies don't sit in the water for days,
but flutter as moths from the skin.
The particles that slough off, into dust, vapor wings that dance in flurries.
There's a better way to have a picnic than to swallow glass jars,
there must be a way to decay that doesn't involve a hot and slow turning
of corpse axes, sunlight heating the spinning bits until
they split
like hairlines.
Tell the coroner we're going for something new. This calls for dancing, this calls open
the bloated bellies of stars.
This is the farewell, the after process, pieces of softly flying body.
Where I, as wings, don't molt into water.
This is how I choose to get out.

Südtirol

Lauren Burgess

Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner

The bottom of a massive geological bowl
that wanted to keep me like the last Werther's
in grandma's dish:
this is where green comes from.
This is where mountains like widespread fingers
hold forests speckled with castles
and brightness. Striking

the dichotomy of Alpine green
and blue: unreachable, halting
vastness,

visible for the tormented joy of the ingested
who see birds leave over peaks,
who wonder if they taste the slightest humidity
on their black tongues. Wonder
from the base of the greatest stomach

where I sat with chickens
in the vineyard,
ate berries off trees,
hiked barefoot,
and learned a good deal
about the functionality
of Poundian economics
and the history of farming equipment.
I wrote some

in my broom-closet-dorm.
The desk touched the bed
and the bed touched the closet.

The window shrunk
when I looked to the seeming peristalsis
of the lush and thought about the chickens.