

How long I stood there, I do not know, it seemed like eons. But as time passed the women started to disappear, and I was left there all alone. I am still standing there today.

I tried to move but I could not, I had become a statue, frozen in time. I wanted to say something or do something, but I could not.

As time passed I went through various regions, which differed somehow . . . and as I progressed it seemed that I could feel the presence of others . . . Gradually they began to materialize, they were women, and as they materialized I slowly ceased to drift . . . until suddenly I stopped, realizing that I was in a huge amphitheater, on the stage. The amphitheater was filled with silent women. They were all watching me.

Then they were gone, and I was floating upwards very slowly. And I drew visions of hunters of various kinds upon the ethereal canvases . . . Once envisioned, the hunters took on a life of their own . . . setting out upon various quests apparently . . .

It began in the air: drifting. I was a spirit or soul without material form. As the scene began, I was thinking back on many of the cherished ideals of my youth . . . or rather they were haunting me . . . I writhed and turned away from them . . .

TOM BALL

For the Theater of Women

SHeldon LEE COMPTON

I Want to Be Like Flannery

She has always sworn it began while she watched a winter tree with limbs full of sparrows (not a field of peacocks!) in silhouette against one of those living blue skies. She testifies before the God-charged world that it began so clearly at that moment she had no ability to remember anything before it. She said she simply lived inside that moment over and over. In that moment, beneath the sky with the silhouettes of sparrows quivering on limbs like veins circled across the sky, she marked her beginning. She seeks out revelation among the living blue light scattered and forlorn. Learning into the unknown, she tilts her head to better hear the voice saying, I am the above and I will tell you that answers are ideas made only for you. Of course, the wolf and the animal spirits in the cemetery and birds making songs in the rain all know without effort, and you do not. They turn to a field of snow and see a field of snow.

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A Game With Its Own Rules

SARP SOZDINLER

The wind kicked in. The steel floor gave and split in two. Billy's shoe popped off his foot and fell from the top of the Ferris wheel. The stray object rotated in the air like a footwear commercial and cratered the unmanned ticket booth below with a bang. Upon impact, the shoe lost its entire sole and half the price his mother paid for with one-eighth of her wage back when she was still alive and healthy enough to wait the nights at Ramona Bar and cruise the afternoons as the only female cab driver in Bennington. She'd bought Billy the pair two birthdays ago, just two weeks before she died in her sleep, of heat-related heart failure. When the doctor broke the news in the waiting room of Saint Patrick's Urgent Care, Billy couldn't decide whether he should take the man who looked too young to be a doctor and too old to be a medical student seriously or not. The man explained with just the wrong face how the late Mrs. Ledoux's veins had enlarged due to a sudden rise in temperature and hindered the flow of blood to the point of total shutdown. In its abstract logic, none of it made sense or sounded like a medical condition to Billy, let alone a condition that some people could actually die from. He couldn't decide whether he was at fault somehow or it's all part of—as she would've called it—"God's plan."

Billy stared down the hole in the ground of his unmoving unit and wondered if it, too, was God's doing. No one seemed to be around to answer that or save him from the trouble. How could it be, when what was left of the amusement park since it closed its doors a year ago was already partly invaded by the marshland it neighbored? In the good old days he spent with his mother there, the park offered everything it currently did not. He liked carousels the most, but the Ferris wheel was her favorite. Whenever they rode it, she acted like anything but a parent, but he didn't mind. This was the only place where Billy couldn't tell who it was the adult among them, and her mother might have been the only person in the world who found the amusement parks actually amusing.

The sky growled apropos of nothing. The rainwater found its way into the wheel and startled the steely old beast back to life. The joints squeaked and pipes moaned with pleasure. Billy closed his eyes and slid his tongue out to taste the wet miracle pouring down. As was the case with most miracles, the rain didn't live up to his expectations. It was plain and steady. A game with its own rules, its own purpose. It didn't change, it didn't abide. It just kept going and got Billy and his shoe and the park all soaked up. It only spared his mother. Then it went away.

Trying to Be

HOLLY DAY

As the years pass, I have grown more aware
of all of the things I seem unable to write about
love, for one thing. I don't know how
to write anything convincing about love.

As my children grow up and my husband gets older
I grow more and more resigned to the things I can't feel
love, especially, I don't think I know what it is.
If I sit and analyze my heart
I'm uncomfortably aware of this pantomime of caring
my fake day-to-day. This is something

I can write about:
my shortcomings as a human.
The things I haven't done.
All of my lies.

soup chicken

VERA HADZIC

my sky is an overturned bowl
bowling is something I do when I'm desperate
desperate birds tuck in wings, torpedo windows
windows those haven't been cleaned in ages
ages are mostly numbers painted over in grease
grease gathers in the curve of the pan
pan, god of wilderness, sings into moss
moss grows like fur along the backs of my hands
hands never dug so slowly as they do now
now I feel the slowness my own pulse
pulse, that's what the sky does when it turns red
red like onions and warm orange soup
soup would be good right about now
now I'm hungry for a nice full bowl
a bowl of sky-soup, maybe
maybe just chicken soup