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The Senator

I.

You go to The Senator's house
because it might be complicated

walking into the State House with your buddy's
nine caliber in your back pocket.

When he answers the door you try to talk
but he shouts

that he's not in the mood
to argue with someone who knows nothing

about politics. *Politics*, you grunt.
And then the gun comes out.

You aren't trembling. This surprises

you, but it surprises him more

because you seem to him
like his daughter—sweet

and blue-eyed.
He's thinking:

isn't this the part where I press a button
and the wires pull me

up into the fly space
and the curtain closes?

But you know better, better than The Senator.
The curtain is already closed.

He asks you if you want
money. And you say:

*Isn't this the part where you tell me
you'd rather have a dick in your face?*

The gun is three inches from his nose,
pointing right between his eyes.

II.

The Senator stares down the barrel of your gun
but he doesn't see the gun at all:

summer, adolescence. He's in the back of his dad's car
with the first girl he's going to fuck.

He's distracted, only for a moment
by her hair

and how its tangles smell like ginger,
like his mother.

The girl thinks that she's going to kiss a boy
and then leave. He's surprised

when it hurts her. He's not scared
when he gets out of the car and she doesn't follow

because she's dead in the backseat.

It never dawns on him that you might shoot—

the Senator never thinks he will get shot;
only that he will get reelected.

He blinks, finally. And you
drop the gun. He has two choices now:

he can call the cops, or he can rough you up.
When he's got you against the brick of his house

III.

you know it's the part where you forgot to leave
yourself an out. Your eyes

are neither opened nor closed.
You know how this ends. (The gun

was fake, wasn't it?)
You are in the other place

now. You've been there once
before. It's not the same as numbness

where the scene happens but it looks all fuzzy.
It's more like being an insect:

everything is a deep dark
and you have to feel your way around.

IV.

This is the part where you tell him
you'd rather have the gun waving in your face.

You've said this once before,
only this time it's a dream. And in the dream

the gun is made of soap.
But in a murderous time

(and this, comrade, is real now)

the stoop is not a stoop.
And The Senator is not a senator.

The brick wall is there
and your back is against it;

it pulls at the cotton of your summer self.
You were just inside. You were just

kissing. You were only eighteen.
No, it's that you're *already* eighteen.

You choose gun,
but it was just a game.

You don't get to choose.
There was no gun.

V.
Something is happening
with The Senator on the stoop

but you're still in the other place.
You get to dwell there a little longer

before the sun comes up.
Your blindness is not like The Senator's

because darkness is not the same
as blindness:

in the one case there's a curtain
keeping out the light.

The Senator stands in the doorway
knowing nothing of your murderous time,

how it passes, again, in beats: hands
thudding against your body.

Your father is roaming the streets somewhere
looking for someone to kill.

Sometimes when you're in the room backstage
you look for a door,

one that will open to a bright light.

Even in the theater of the mind

you know where everything is:
trap door to happy ending, trap door

to irreverence, trap door
after trap door, all the ways it might unfold.

But you remember: the sting of knuckles grazing brick
when you drag yourself from behind the building,

hailing the cab; you remember
the smell of clean hair.

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