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Esmerelda

She slammed into the rainbow with her car,
stabbed the pot of gold until it bled yellow.

And as for the dream, it never stood a chance.
She slept with poisons in her head

and every phantom man and woman took their dose.
Even the tiniest of hopes were crunched like ants

beneath the heel of her fascist shoe.
Smiles were boarded up. Eyes abandoned.

Every day, she battled the kiss, the hug, the tender look,
the cruelty of loving couples.

The Man Waiting for Someone in the Park

If only he were chained to a rock
and not in a park somewhere,
cold and bitter and dying for a cigarette.

If just for an hour or two,
he could be stretched on a rack,
or hog-tied, naked from the waist up,
whipped and flailed until his back
runs creeks of crimson.

But he's waiting for someone,
muttering why don't they show.

Why are there no more pillories,
scaffolds, cat-o-nine tails?

A stoning would be just the thing
to pelt the hours away.

Oh tie me to a horse

and drag me half a mile
down a rough rocky trail,
he implores the chickadee,
the rabbit scurrying for its brush.
Martyrdom's a dying art, he concludes.
Then he looks again to his watch
but its hands are too thin
to be razors and the time it bottles
is a poison slower than life.

The Question of My Survival

The cube is no wilderness
and the computer screen
can conjure up the image
of a Minnesota forest at dawn
but doesn't know it from
a sale at Walmart,
so it's up to me to remember
deer nibbling, fox trotting,
bobcat slinking silently
between the grass and light.

This office is the engine
so they tell me, though
I prefer the brain with its heart
somewhere devouring the
dank water fruits with moose,
or crawling from a groundhog's hole
or high in an old oak
jack-hammering woodpecker holes.

A guy thinks he's making a living
but the real living is elsewhere.
I see a black bear, head bent,
sipping at the stream,
follow a wolverine track,
watch fishers cavort in splashy shallows.
One paycheck comes.
It's never enough.
Another soars with the hawk,
romps with the swallows.
I lie on my back
on the soft, giving, earth... pay-dirt.

The work of Australian born **John Grey** has appeared in *Hubbub*, *South Carolina Review*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. New work will appear in *Light*, *Pearl*, and the *Worcester Review*.

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