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Abortion Counseling

I have been looking forward to this
sterile, safe place
where women are trained
to be gentle and quick.
Their job is not to judge.

He is with me.
I had to let him come—
he's paying.

The door opens into
an antechamber.
The receptionist sits behind two layers
of bulletproof glass.

The glass is the first thing
that scares me:
a reminder that people have been killed
for doing what I want done to me.

Sheets and sheets of information—
stark black type detailing
side effects, signs of problems,
how not to end up here again.

What it will feel like during and after.
Buy maxi pads: there might be bleeding.
The cool, objective tone of twelve-point font.
The standard thickness of paper.

The counselor has straight
brown hair. Her desk is steel.
I forget her name
immediately. She asks all the questions
my parents wanted to, but didn't.
I hate her.

The doctor is blonde.
She doesn't meet my eyes.
She arranges her instruments and dilates my cervix.
She runs the machine, which sounds like a compressor.
She tells me things, like
Now you'll feel my touch.
Now you'll feel a pinching.
Now it's almost done.
The counselor holds my hand
so I won't scream or run away.
I love her

Why People Have Affairs

The most Edenic moment of my life,
the year I spent away from genteel Northeast suburbs,
away from college, ivy, and reliable cars,
picking tomatoes and weeding on a farm in Colorado,

the day-long moment spent away from the farm
on the ridge overlooking it,
hiking in the dark carrying pans and blankets,
spreading those blankets and curling together like coyote cubs,
waking in the morning to his face fresh with mischief,
making love, naked and shameless under the great sky
as though we lay on the altar of a cathedral,
learning he had remembered the condoms, and my favorite
tea for afterwards.

The best part: remaining naked all day,
following the shade around the ponderosa pine,
reading aloud and talking about nothing memorable,
simply being in the most honest way we knew how—

which, of course, was a lie
because he was engaged and I was a lesbian.
In Oregon, a woman was waiting for him.
In Connecticut, a woman was waiting for me.

is it really betrayal if the pine trees don't care,
nor the scrubby oaks, nor the boulders—
wouldn't they give some sign if what they witnessed
was wrong?

Years later I saw Brokeback Mountain
and I was back there under the wide Western sky
pinned between thighs of wild mountains
by the honesty of outlaw kisses.
I recognized those men as myself,
their passion as what we shared
away from obligation and work

in a place to which we can never return.

Faithfulness

I arrived at his party smelling of her, the woman who'd fucked me in dormitory light with no candle, no romance, just an "Oh my god—" Then with a "we're late," she pulled me out of the room. I found him where the crowd spilled into snow and skeletal moonlight. He handed me a beer and his latest book I wanted to father the next batch of those poems, wanted to be immortalized for breaking his heart. The world shimmered, she disappeared, I grabbed the lapels of his black wool coat, but he wouldn't kiss me. He was inside a poem, fifteen years old, it was that memory when he got stood up. Everything horrible repeats itself. He said, "Your girlfriend's coming," and shuffled away, the sexiest train wreck to ever grace the earth.

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Kathryn Good-Schiff is the author of two chapbooks: *Curl*, a finalist for the Robin Becker Chapbook Prize, and *East of North*, available at <http://poetryeastofnorth.blogspot.com/>. Her poems and short prose have been published in various journals including *Pank*, *Kalliope*, *Quay*, and *Holly Rose Review*. She holds an MFA from Goddard College.