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Three Poems

By Benjamin Goldberg

Misery Tour

At first there's little more
than a crumbling toy store
frequented by weeds.
The windows on Main Street
are mainly paper or plywood,
the faces smiling in them
painted on. The Indian family
serving Tandoor chicken
hustles old stereos next door,
tax-free, at back-room prices.

In the remaining shard
of your side-view mirror,
an arthritic woman smiles
as she waters the hedges
of a senior-community
whose last residents have long gone.
Only one FM station still plays,
and you're praying
your beater doesn't break down
as you stop at the broken stoplight.

Promises to Wake to

I heard you whisper
that you'd be first and only

to stand over the mattress,
pinch the IV drip, and leave

soaking in the bedpan
a bouquet of poison ivy.

Gingerbread House

Between Moose Bottom Road and Naked Creek
it's perfect leave-your-baby-in-the-car weather.
Tucked in the folds of Old Rag Mountain, its dumpsters
lend to the ambience of burnt sugar and swamp.

Flies buzz near a bucket of mop water
the smell of a bathroom you could die pissing in.
Someone's grandma in zebra-print booty shorts winks
at a Mormon whose vintage titty mag peaks from his bag.

In the open kitchen, a plate drops into a skillet
of scowls. Even the misplaced hipster found her
place here sketching on the placemat portraits of a waitress

who calls her diners "honey" or "ladybug."

Cool air caresses your face from an open mini-fridge
as fingernails polished the color of pan grease
tear plastic wrapping off a Black Forest cake:
nobody stays hungry long enough.

Benjamin Goldberg lives with his wife outside Washington, D.C. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Raleigh Review*, *MAYDAY Magazine*, *Terrain.org*, and *The Southeast Review* in which he was a finalist for the 2012 Gearhart Poetry Prize. He teaches high school English.

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