

April 30, 1973

Kelly DuMar

A freewheeling wind was blowing
under a tilted sky, lit for spring, so I skipped
the bus, walked all the miles home, a book
weighted my bag—overdue— *Writings
and Drawings* by Bob Dylan.

Before I left school the librarian asked me
to renew or return it. I told her I lost it.

*That's too bad, she said,
now you'll have to pay for it.*

But I felt giddy, new-sprung and risk free
on this road, for my boyfriend, his birthday, just sixteen—
here was his present.

Once upon a time it was fall
this boy and I met where Main
Street's a road we walked with my
hair blowing long as a scarf, whipping
our cheeks, in black pea coats and jeans
thin as blue skin. And the wind was a car
full of boys screaming past asking,
Are you in loooooove?

Winter was letters, long distance.
One day he drove hours in a car with his brother
to surprise me, wearing his favorites—torn, he asked,
Patch all my holes, and he ripped up the jeans, and I stitched
them by hand. *I'll wear them forever*, he said.

An accident is, he can't help it—
a boy wants a big brother
who drives every road fast.
When they are bored
they're looking for ruin.

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Playful is careless. What
nobody means is to get hurt.

A funeral is where any body may look
for signs of a life. In his casket his jeans
folded and placed at his feet are
one thing in the world whole.

Pinked

Kelly DuMar

May, my eye spies
a pink dress—tree bark
flaked from its trunk and pinned
to the surface of earth, as if cut
out of paper and placed on her
table, a pattern my mother
was sewing, her shears

are for pinking, she unrolls
inch by inch her tape to squeeze me
by my waist and measure, take me to the store
I'm picked, among the countless
cottoned, blossomed, from bolts
I am one here, her only

choice, Simplicity is what a pattern calls
for, paper like the thinnest skin—I'm not
skinny, like my sisters, she pinches
my belly rolls and pats my jiggly butt
becoming, a May Day

dress, color of sheep sorrel
lady slipper, dogwood as I dance
around a pole, pinked with sweat
sewing me, sewing me bark
of a tree no other mother makes

Heaven and Earth

Kelly DuMar

How could we have known heaven
is *watching*—we were only teens
our lusty bodies were making
goodbye, *like this*—

a piggyback ride to the door—
fresh boy—I look back on our last romp
in your father's house—my own father,
outside, honking for me to hurry—

your eyes, rimmed in gold
glasses, you're almost finished
wearing your braces

doe-eyed, blondish I'm blinding
your sight, my hair swishing your face,
arms crossed to belt your neck
thighs squeezing your bony hips

on a slow-motion jog up the shag-
carpeted steps of your broken, split-level home
—hanging on, hanging on—

'til weeks later, the morning after your accident—

on the toilet—
I stumble lead headed from bed—
and, from up above—*where's the ceiling?*
I sense you, hovering—*watching*—
me wake up and discover
the dead see every body they belonged to
in the first day after day after day of departure—
changing my underwear
or bare assed in the shower,
I'm lashed to your glassless eyes—heaven
hangs no curtain of privacy—you see me sharper,
weaker, *wholer*, and unpretty as hell, but heaven
means I have to let you see me, pissing, like this

Count Backward

Kelly DuMar

Words wear masks, his bossy
thumbs jerk around inside your mouth
and see? he's aiming his needle for
 open your nice
clamped shut. You're resisting—
even if your mother
 wants—the jab
done, quick, but you can block
him coming with your lips
refuse to let him stick you 'til he's mad
and makes you exit, without a trinket
 a hospital nurse
knows how to help you climb into a high-
cushioned chair, unmasked, her face
beams a grown-up—safe, your nice
mouth opens wide so she can reach
 the hurt.
You have exactly
 the right kind
of teeth, she counts, only one
is bad—one has to go away
all you have to do is sleep
 to be forgiven
inhale, backward counting *100, 99, 98, 97*—waking up,
she's smiling still—and there's your mother, too, waiting
 the rotten deed, it's done
and in the basket, choose from all the rings
a ruby glowing, fits your finger—close enough
you flaunt it to the beach
 your mother's rushing
your sisters and brothers have been
swimming through one whole day
 you can't get wet, but what
you're wearing everyone wants, except yours is—
the nurse promised—
 priceless, your mother
says it's time to go home, and on the fretful trek
from beach to car—past bushes wild with berries—
your tongue lifts cotton, licks a hole, tastes of blood,
now will your other teeth try harder to be good.