

Cassidy**McFadzean**

THE WAY

The way I can't stop glancing behind me
on trails only wide enough for one,
passing Happy Hollow where we cornholed
beans in white sacks, hurling airborne rabbits.
I traced the path like a reluctant crook,
rehearsing my crime to think it through
then disappeared into the woods.

If the forest opened itself to me,
how deeply would I follow it inside?
Or if you dropped pebbles to follow,
would I allow you to invite me in,
to enter your home, to use the toilet,
let me be enwrapped in a stranger's arms?
Nearly two minutes in, I remembered

I'd forgotten about rape, mislaid
the notion of fear, prompted by the man
clad in Lycra shorts jogging toward me,
body sweat a glaze. His gaze surveyed me.
Distant beasts brayed to the rhythm of his
ample breathing. I found my SMS
wouldn't send. So if I fell surrounded

by trees and Nature—so be it—released
of physical being I felt it all:
fear, lust, a body weighed down with plastic
beads, whose shadow flitted past hickory.
The matter was taken from me, a child's,
and seized. I embraced my slumping to see
where the unfamiliar feeling would lead.

A pale cicada curled at my feet.
I imagined the life I still wanted:
my cursor blinking on a dizzied screen
In a world of mainly insects did I weigh
in it too heavily? I fished a fly
from a cobweb and it flew into me,
squandered freedom colliding with atoms

as we all do. In the woods' gentle
clearing, a dog-walker found me wandering
and helped me find the way. We paused looking
over the graveyard, and each blotch she read
on my face she saw as brushstrokes—not wings.
I turned back at the cemetery's gate,
and lost myself in the forest again.

STUDY OF A TORSO

When pictures of decapitated journalists
started appearing in my twitter feed,
their heads lolled in dirt cartoonishly.
I've been reading the news
so much it's entered me.
In the night I dream I'm raped
in my bed when my husband's away,
the pain in my abdomen so sharp
it wakens me. In a dark room
my iPhone leads me to the law student
who didn't know she'd been attacked
until she viewed it on a screen.
She'd said anything to clear his name.
When I drive my husband to Mercy
the third time in as many weeks,
ice obscures the windshield.
I never drive, and he makes me brake
so he can get out to clear the ice away,
blood streaking the glass,
globules of flesh smeared on the seat.
A bloody doorknob greets our neighbour,
circular saw still plugged in on the lawn.
I dreamed of it for weeks: his screams,
how much worse it might have been.
I'd asked if I should go back to look
for his fingers, unaware he held them
still attached in his hand.
How he'd get me off without them
flitted through my mind even then.
In a room full of brains
I feel the heat of synapses.
I am flesh marionette, off-balance
waiting for the next catastrophe.
A weapon wails from the yard,
I pick my fingers off the floor
not knowing I had it in me.