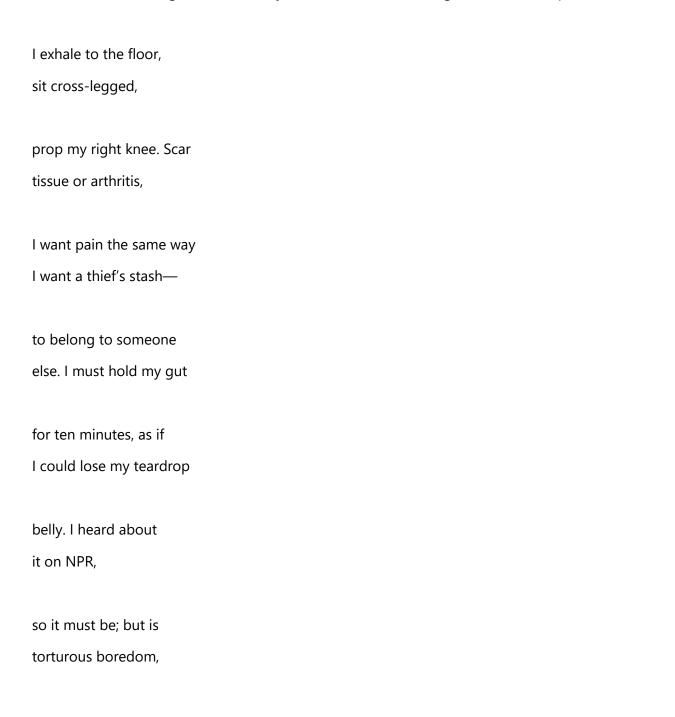
Distraction

K.R. Rosman

While sheltering from the smoky air in Seattle, and reading David Huddle's poem *Thirteen*.



middle-age realized. After one minute, I read poetry to my son, stumbling from his room. He's thirteen, smart with adolescence. Sometimes he glints like water, or the rubbed edge of aluminum now I'm thinking of airplanes, how my lover tilted his wings, made me dizzy, thrilled me. Long time since those cradled breasts were sucked to halffilled balloons. But this oppressive air, house shut against sun and smokeMy lover is gone. I practice inference not meditation muscle and breath, heartache. I'm bored of longing or longing from boredom. Longing to inhale without the ache of ash. Better to read—exhale, press belly to backbone about a girl who once kissed mid-day, mid-street. In my smoky home, I desire the saltdamp scent of him, soap over sweat, familiar as my grandpa's hands, nicked from work, clean for lunch. Also, the salty rise. Yes, I could smell that, too. If olfaction could be a superpower, I'm descended from gods. My lover discarded me like a tossed-away dress, and I'm no longer a girl like Bess, who ran into her closet, sat among wads of clothes on the floor, and let me forget his hands, light on the stick that lifts or drops, flails if he prefers. Give me distraction from my desire, that first flush be it love, boredom,

or lust-crush. Give me the internet—stream the clutched-from-death and swifter than water saviors. Let me inhale air without ash. Shade me from the smoke-sun. Give me purity, self-deception. I know the earth is burning and flooding; I know we starve others, bomb them, take their breath. I'm not speaking metaphorically. This no longer regards my lover or my son or poetry. Outside,

a pink sun lulls. Ash falls.

Hundreds of miles from here, imagine a wretched diadem of trees a-flame. Glutinous heat, lust unleashed. Fire steals timber, oxygen; or perhaps we are thieves. If you were a lodgepole, wouldn't you want relief from disease, pestilence? In your last days, wouldn't you want heat like sex to release your seed? Inexhaustible fury—a god's jealous eye. Ash drifts, turns summer photos snowy, reverse

negatives of what is.

My eye tricks my slower	
mind towards skiffs of snow	
on the Clark Fork's banks.	
A horror show with such	
pacing we're forgetting	
to be scared. Beautiful	
sun, gift of ash. I	
don't want to be here.	
I want the swift green	
of brush and tree, the spray	
of startled birds. I want	
to run. I exhale	
and Sheep Gap burns, with	
or without me. I want	
But deception is ours,	
and it is too late	
to undo the ash	
that coats our eyes, our lungs.	

When he and I flew, we were above it all. A different mountain, teens lit and threw firecrackers—those tight wads of thrill. They videoed their crime and ran heedless, perhaps scared enough to try to get away. They know the bright edges of things gone wrong. And I try to be satisfied with fuel economy, air-conditioning, driving in the carpool lane with a latté. My crime is smooth—up-wash

lifting aluminum

wings, willful prurience.
You, oh, you complacent
mother, exhale your knees
towards earth. Pray for
nature's eye to lose you
or to find another—
to leave you and yours
alone. Pray the green
beneath you
holds.

K.R. Rosman was raised in Idaho and Montana, and now lives in Seattle, Washington. She is an educator and writer, with stories published in *Superstition Review, Platte Valley Review, Adirondack review,* and others. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts from Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University.