

Distraction

K.R. Rosman

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

I exhale to the floor,
sit cross-legged,

prop my right knee. Scar
tissue or arthritis,

I want pain the same way
I want a thief's stash—

to belong to someone
else. I must hold my gut

for ten minutes, as if
I could lose my teardrop

belly. I heard about
it on NPR,

so it must be; but is
torturous boredom,

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 air-

planes, how my lover

tilted his wings, made me

dizzy, thrilled me. Long

time since those cradled

breasts were sucked to half-

filled balloons. But this

oppressive air, house shut

against sun and smoke—

My 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 salt-

damp 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 in-
hale 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 fire-

crackers—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.