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Imitation of Elizabeth J. Colen's *Five Fictions* from *What Weaponry*

DETENTION

Chalk dust falls on your perfect Mary Janes and that awful, screeching groan of the white stick on the blackboard makes you sorrier than anything you did in class today. She's sitting at the desk next to you and she smells like the bottom of a fish tank – you think you spot a hint of evil swirling around her, but you can't be sure it's not just the wind. "Paper airplanes do not belong in the classroom" reflects off your eyes 7, now 8 times. Your fingertips are dry and heavy. She hacks loudly, something dislodges from the back of her throat, and you think the sound of the clock might've just gotten louder. You miss your mother. The collar of your shirt pulls tight as you realize the fish-tank-smell migrated behind you. "Enough," a bitter voice spits at your french braids. "Go outside."

ART CLASS

My vase exploded in the kiln, and something about me deep inside cares more about the fractures of clay than anyone back home. My insides drip anguish and I can't seem to stand up straight. The walls fold into me and I know I'm on the floor, but I don't care. I don't, so stop asking. Someone brushes their foot on my leg, first soft, then hard. I think I'm sinking into the concrete – it's all suddenly too cold. Stop kicking me. I imagine a bouquet in the vase I made. It was supposed to sit on my windowsill. It was mine, it was mine. It's all gone wrong. A piece of me just died and fell into the basement. I think of tomorrow and hate myself for it.

PLAYGROUND

We sit on the swings and smoke and I remember where I was when you first showed me a Nirvana song; my belly filled with this weird pressure and I knew life would be different with you here. No one was like you, your ginger roots made eye contact with me from under your stiff dyed black hair and you smeared makeup across your eyelids and boys didn't do that, I'd thought, but you did. My dad doesn't like you. You don't like my dad either and you're a lot more loud about it than I want you to be. I hiss and drop the end of my cigarette and realize I'd smoked it up to my pointer finger; it's red and pulsing and mad now. It was all so very fun while it lasted but now I cough when we play tag and you push a lot harder than you used to.

DOG

It's only you and the circle of hair sitting next to you now, beating its tail on the arm of the couch. Now you've spread your wings and flown, beyond what anyone expected or wanted from

you. Last Christmas some aunt or cousin or something asked you about when you're getting married and hot tears fell from your eyes. She scurried back to the dessert table and no one talked to you for the rest of the season. You feel like an ogre. You don't like going outside anymore. Seems like someone's always looking. Looking at your sad face or your sad body or your sad complexion or the sad haze of smoke that seems to follow you wherever you go. You miss a life that never happened and rip your nails off at the quick just to feel something. A big heavy head lifts up and places itself on your knee, and you can hear the thwacking of a tail hitting against the arm of the couch – faster now, lots faster. You're crying. He knows. He cares, but he doesn't think you're an ogre.

DRAGONFLY

It lands right on the notebook paper next to me, the one where I scratched out everything I wrote with such a fervor that the tip of my pencil broke through. I stare, but try not to make it too obvious – I don't want to make her uncomfortable, like she's performing for some terrifying giant or being studied for all she is and will be. I try to give her a break; I look at my palms for a while, but they're so sweaty that they too become difficult to look at. I look back at the dragonfly and feel the gears in my brain start to roll. "Where would I go if I could fly?" I wonder to no one but myself, and somehow I know the answer. The dragonfly starts gently fluttering her wings and lifts off of the notebook paper, flying toward a tree. As she leaves, I envision a frog lassoing her with his tongue and swallowing her whole. It's comforting and I don't know why.