

Jennifer Lagier

Scotch and Water

In a Quonset hut officers' club
at the Cape Flattery SAC airbase,
my husband would order
a scotch and water for me to nurse
throughout the night
as he got louder, more aggressive,
until falling-down drunk.

Young airmen who
observed my unhappiness,
galloped to the rescue.
Prince Charming wannabes
led me onto the dance floor,
tried every line in the book,
to get into my pants.

On my 20th birthday,
one brought me cake,
flowers, ordered champagne,
held my hand under the table,
offered to pick up the tab
for divorce, help me
make a fresh start.

Guilt-ridden, I turned him down,
assisted my sodden mate to our car
where he pissed himself,
puked all over the upholstery.
I drove us back to the Coast Guard station,
a metal trailer we called home.

A Jagged Wretchedness

Just past sunrise,
Monterey's homeless appear,
wander out of sage underbrush,
sticky monkey thickets,
rampant clumps of yellow oxalis.

Some have established camps
among eucalyptus, beneath overpasses;
others sprawl upon cold sand dunes,
protected by snarls
of washed-ashore driftwood.

On Sundays, they gather
to receive a free breakfast
served by volunteers
at Window on the Bay:
scrambled eggs, biscuits,
cups of steaming hot coffee.

With pit bulls, black garbage bags,
rusty shopping carts and cardboard signs,
they migrate from Del Monte Beach
to Highway One exits where they beg,
stationed at off-ramps among blue lupine,
wild radish, golden puddles of poppies.

Jennifer Lagier has published sixteen books. Her work has appeared most recently in *From Everywhere a Little: A Migration Anthology*, *Fire and Rain: Eco-poetry of California*, *Missing Persons: Reflections on Dementia*, *Silent Screams: Poetic Journeys Through Addiction & Recovery*. Newest books: *Camille Mobilizes* (FutureCycle)

and *Trumped Up Election* (Xi Draconis Books). Website:
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