

MARK JASKOWIAK

Camping

Around the fire in the cornfield
we drink whiskey and piss
in the ditch. A crane at the high bank,
rust collected like coral on its frame.

I hold the flashlight like a heart
through the field. It runs forever.
Tassels show their high hair
in the dark. Seeds in a cob

sheathed like a blanketed woman
I won't ever touch. I lie down
in the green tent with smoke
in my hair. While the others sleep

I drag a plow through time's throat.
Collect my life like crickets
from the furrows. Listen in the night
how they cry without mouths.

In Wyoming

With great care my dad
has been pouring red wine for us
until we have dry mouths at the shore
of mountains who grow more purple

against the darkening sky.
There's a man who asked
the microphone stand to dance,
and now he kisses its head tenderly
with closed eyes, singing

"Sunday Morning Coming Down,"
a song that my dad used to play in the car,
and we both open our mouths
and watch each other eat its words, so completely,

over and over, until I recognize the wood table
between us as a distant artifact
dredged out of some hidden cavern
of my mind. So when the music ends

and the singer passes our table
smelling of divorce,

I have nothing but this feeling
I want to rest my glass on.

Winter, Queens Mead Apartments

On the street tonight a man prays
his cigarette into a lantern.

And high up, a woman kneels
to remove her shoes and thinks
of mold collecting in the kitchen.

Though a mirror hangs
she prefers a cup of tea
that wears her face like clouds
upon an ocean.

The rope entrance of a childhood
treehouse dangles over her
as she sleeps. She begs her pillow
for the unknown password

that will raise her up the trunk,
to the place where she can taste
all of time like a blackberry.

In the room below, a butcher
cares for his beard. His wife
on the bed, blown open like a napkin.

Mark Jaskowiak is a recent graduate of DePauw University.