

## Robert Beveridge

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### King of Cups

Lips on lips like paint  
to canvas. The sun  
through the clouds as if  
through the perfect  
diffusion filter. Smoke  
rises against the sun,  
whispers delicious sonnets  
against the cotton  
of your shirt. Mustard-  
yellow sky, saffron-  
yellow Bollywood  
horror movies, somehow  
the finest way to spend  
the final days before  
the defense of your  
dissertation on *film noir*  
and the final whispers  
of Miramax's influence  
on the presence  
of man-boobs on celluloid.  
We've asked the ghost  
of Maya Deren for aid,  
kissed Claudio Fragasso's  
fetid ring. Still we wait  
for the sign that tells us,  
in perfect harmony: come  
forth. Drink from the fountain  
that tastes of espresso  
and grave dust. Beg  
your final favor  
from gods you cannot  
bring yourself to touch.  
The corpses at the table  
may be guests, may be  
the main course.  
You consider the side  
dishes, pick up your fork.

## Pursuit

You keep two trained hounds  
in your pocketbook, get them out  
in those flight-or-fight situations.  
A flick of your head and they're  
off to threaten the tax collector,  
cordon the area, gather intel  
on the Jersey recycling mob.

At home, in the basement, they  
take on renovation projects.  
They made you a rumpus room,  
worked in tandem, one to burrow,  
one to digest.<sup>1</sup> The sole difficulty  
was the drywall. You had to assist  
when the hammer was necessary.

At night, before bed, the three of you  
take demitasse cups of port,  
share a cigar or a joint, whatever  
the day demands. You never fail  
to wake in a tangle of legs, wet noses.

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1 “one to burrow/one to digest” is from Barbara Sabol’s “Vermis Equinox”.

## **Shied**

It took a single night of feints, flirts,  
kisses, pinches for me to wrap my mind  
around the lush curves of your body,  
the sweet cries of release. A single night  
consumed me, sent tendrils of your lust,  
your sex, your sweetness to cuddle  
every organ, every muscle.

It took a single sentence, and the time  
to read it, for you to pull away,  
detach the host, the fasteners, glide  
off and never speak again, and I hate  
myself for being so entranced by the swing  
of your hips as you left me shivering.

## **Tapeworm**

you never realized  
how much room there is  
inside the human body

it took a roast chicken leg  
and four leather straps  
to show you

## Woof

And then there was the last day, and after that you remained bereft, soiled, in a coma that did not carry the stigma

of being medically-induced. All your friends visited, each with hitch in voice, each privately sure you could hear

the endless rain of platitudes. And you did, but they sounded more like napalm, and you ran, zigzag because you've read

far too many spy novels, to dodge your old Aunt Orange. Or was it Aunt Chloe? Some things got stirred up in there,

and the silt never quite settled back into the proper depressions. And you lay there, vulnerable

to the quaking hands of an intern's questioning sexuality and wonder why you haven't yet woken, though you figure

you can when you really want to. Could it be you fear you'll awaken at the vet instead of in the hospital? The smells

of the cleaning products are unfamiliar. You can't remember where you left your juice glasses, whether the egg rolls

at your favorite restaurant are vegetarian, how many pigs can dance on the head of a pulpit. Or a hypodermic.

Let's forget these not-too-starched white sheets, machines whose beeps are not regular enough. Let's forget livestock

and homily and family twice removed in Luxembourg (oh, wait, you already have) and just remember the feel

of new-mown grass against our bare feet, the delicious acid scent of unburnt gasoline in the air, wander through

front yards in the block we lived on in 1979, the big circle called Tall Timber Drive in Hampton, PA, with neighbors

absent so as not to chase us with sticks, or let their dogshit desiccate where inquisitive kids might step. Take my hand.

**Robert Beveridge** makes noise ([xterminal.bandcamp.com](http://xterminal.bandcamp.com)) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *The Literary Yard*, *Big Windows*, and *Locust*.