

Blurred Lines

Lindsay Killips

(After reading Lacey Roop's "Gender is a Universe")

Sitting on the cold, thin paper
I tried to find the answer to my doctor's questions:
Are those bruises? ...Hickeys? Are you safe?

I kick my feet firmly against air
looking at the blank walls for answers
as silence screams in our ears
demanding to know the truth of the matter.

I inhale as much of the world as I can
sigh out: *uum. I don't know, they just appear.*

And at home I eat dinner on a couch my father bought—
a monetary exchange for absolution.

How many couches are halfway homes
for bodies deemed property
by those who exchange money for furniture?

I evaluate the broken blood vessels strewn across my skin
trying to disentangle bruise from hickey.

The appalling tragedy dawns on me that
either way they are just ruptured corridors for blood.
And the world tells me bruises are bad but hickeys are fine
because hickeys are from love, love so strong someone
tried to suck it out of me or passion so elating he longed
to taste the salt staining my skin.

But I beg the sky to tell me why the wives who used to talk
in my mother and father's kitchen would check behind their shoulders
to see if their husbands were coming within earshot,
would call the marks on their skin hickeys, not the police.
I let anger and pain and sadness and confusion leak out of my pores
desperately trying to find God to ask him *What kind of God permits abuse?*

I finish my dinner to be left only with an unquenchable hunger for
justice. I drain water from my cup as quickly as those husbands sieved
strength like water from the ones who formed life within their very bodies.

I wash my empty dishes with the stillness of the air holding me in discomfort like Amy must have felt when her husband would grab her by her wrist and rip her through the air as if she were a machete. But he would leave her more wounded than sugarcane crops after they've been severed. He would leave her wilted—bruised and broken—on the ground, silent. *Covered in hickeys*, he would tell their children, *covered in love*.

As my dishes dry I sit in glow of the TV hoping the light will dry me of this suffocating molasses like feeling restraining every part of me. That I am stuck on this couch with skin that looks like July's firework sky. My flesh mirrors the mothers in the neighborhood where I learned how to tie my shoes and count to ten and lock my door when dad came home.

So at my next appointment I think I'll tell my doctor that they are
"a little bit of both and sometimes neither"

That some are bruises from colliding into too many corners.

That some are bruises from the trauma of appeased fathers that exchange their money for freedom—absolution of responsibility.

That some are hickeys from boys who tried to suck the hurt out of me.

That others are hickeys from boys who turned into wild beasts in the night once they smelled me.

That sometimes my skin is simultaneously scattered with bruises and hickeys, and at other times my skin is simply skin, just different shades.

That I, just like all the other mothers and daughters
are just night skies
bursting with fireworks
that hold our voices
as we are left speechless
in awe.

Point of View Award Winner



Son of Goob
Thomas R. Donat
Ceramic
12" x 4" x 4"