

Jessica Tyner

TWO DAYS PRIOR TO THE BURIAL

twenty-some years and all i have is one memory
of you – well, maybe not one but one collection
that is the same the same
with different places and people but we just kept
acting them out over and over remember
all those times the waiters thought you were mexican
(my skin being so much whiter than yours – white
like hospital linens or the deepest center of stargazer lilies)
¿Qué te gusta comer? but more than that
i remember the down-cast gaze of your eyes shoulders
curved in like damp heavy wings jaw twitching
beneath masseter in that way all men have
of showing pain hurt fear humiliation no more
shattered ashtrays splintered cue sticks urine-soaked
closets i don't miss you (sometimes quietly i miss
what i wish you had been) i miss your strong white teeth
before the chemo ate the bones down to nail-thin shaven peels
i miss the decade before i found out you didn't meet her
at a friend's party but through her prison
writings memory forgive me I miss your accent
when I hear it in my voice say eugene guitar fuchsia
i miss the days when i didn't notice the difference in our skin
i miss the nights you made me brown cows milky streams
licking down the glass



HOW TO OIL AN INDIAN MAN'S HAIR

Your apartment smells like coconut oil
in the mornings. Watch the Vatika bottle
spin lazy circles in the microwave to be sure
it doesn't melt. You sit between my legs,
your dry naked feet crossed and me
perched like a fragile, cautious bird
on the buttery leather couch. Pull over the cheap
dark square table, fold a paper napkin twice,
pour the milky warm oil into my palm,
place the bottle on the napkin.
I wear nothing but your boxer shorts,
your low tsk tsk as the oil slips
through my thin fingers, burrows between bones,
falls onto pallid thighs white as flashes
against your skin. Begin at your scalp,
rub it in.
Add more oil, finger comb your long black hair,
curling, waking snakes unwinding down your back.
Take off your glasses, thumb your temples. I'm greased
as a dirty dog to my elbows. Stop, wait,
still
for your giant perfect hands
(puppy hands, my janu)
to swallow mine easily as a cobra. You
smelled like coconuts

cracked open
letting all the sweetness out.