

Jacqueline Rhodes

Dissolutas

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9:20 a.m.: I shake out the rug.

You talk about French roast, the Times,
dairy or soy—*your teeth on my thumb*, I think.
Blue carpet '97, I think. Morning:
my knuckles inside you, you facing the floor,
knees rubbing in dog hair and coffee stains.

Steel-cut oats and a fried egg. Breakfast,
now, is only that. I bite through a peach, sift
the mail, pull a torn cactus pad, even up
my plant pots. I pare the succulent—
agaves, wax plants, jades—from under my nails.

4:18 p.m.: I bare my teeth.

We meet on the library's fourth floor,
by the phones, hands in our own slack pockets.
Unjacketed, your shoulders muscled bare,
your hair sunstriped like shadowed porches,
you are more lover than loved.

We make sex and fury polite stacks, pleated
and bound like your braided hair. Too soon,
we will mind only the borrowed books.
I grin unfortunate desire, tear it,
offer it as dog-eared proof.

1:07 a.m.: I am surprised by obligation.

Kissing you, like biting an orange, is
cold, indifferent in its tension.
Wet. Ordinary. I hold your face,
fingertip to earlobe, offer mine.
Take. Eat. This is my resistance.

Our ridiculous mouths together, I see
my hunger, my burst and bartered soul.
I mass your hair one-fisted, regret
my imitated passion, your silence,
the simple, wasted, tin-roofed rain.

Author Bio

Jacqueline Rhodes is a writer and academic. She is a Professor of English at California State University (San Bernardino). She lives in southern California. Her work has appeared in *QP: Queer Poetry*, *The Adirondack Review*, and *Woodtick*.

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