

KRISTIANE WEEKS

Shaken and Stirred 102

English Graduate Writing Award Winning Poem

104

Deep as Oceans

Wildfire Season

105

SHAKEN AND STIRRED

Frank O'Hara said after the first glass of vodka,
 you can accept
 just about anything of life, even your own mysteriousness, but
 what if
 your body can't accept the Vodka?
 My grandparents didn't sail
 from Prussia for me to form a worming stomach,
 but I didn't design
 my innards: slow-roasted swine on the birch pole,
 glazed skin falling off
 as it tenderizes, with time as the perfect marinade. Mysteriousness
 believes
 my intestines glow, twinkling Christmas lights on twine, twinkling
 from all the black holes along the way,
 twigs falling from careful beaks
 of birds building a nest nestled between branches
 of my ribcage,
 relentless motion. My own mysteriousness
 can be summed up: blue grass in Indiana,
 crab grass at the feet—the classic one-two jab to the jaws
 of every goose-necked bottle that's passed
 through ancestral hands . . .
 At least I can lie in the soft blues of you,
 Indiana, since my feet carry
 no balance and, sure as hell, we know Vodka never
 let anyone stand
 on theirs without willowing in the wind like long confetti-colored
 streamers . . .

KRISTIANE WEEKS

vodka-bodies,
the only ones who aren't reaching
for spindled clouds,
rolling like gemstones in brown streams. When we
were climbing up
Chimney rock, I refused to drink until we reached the peak, then
I drank
it all in. The river, such a sparkling small intestine hiding under
cancers of green
puffs, exposed aging sediments and calcium snuck
between cracks in the mountain's heart. We cannot love the stone
forever;
the trees won't allow such exposure,
no excavating their
bones,
or ours.

RESEARCH

CREATIVE

DEEP AS OCEANS

Navy sailor in salted waves away from the greens,
and overwhelming alcoholic perfume of Glory Days
arrives, pours into the receiver of a rotary phone
he finds, gives to me for an engagement ring.

I can never get it to catch his line, the dial-tone's
always singing Fuck the US military, fuck the US
ten times over before it clicks to zero, zero . . .

Now the uniform delicately places bouquets
of foxglove and succulent in the barrels of oak
whiskey. Take a sip, or two, get that same look
in your eye, cup-up-heart-strings gaze you had

when I asked if you were excited for your second
son and you answered "not really" . . . Nothing but
the sting of a beating heart; the time when I'm sixteen

and the kitchen manager at Outback Steakhouse gives
me his best life advice: Don't marry someone because
you have a kid with them. This lesson is called, "I Regret
It Every Day." Autonomy knows not to marry the first

limber branch that hands out sparkling grape seeds,
but no one else will learn this until we all slide like hail
storms and curse like the black glittering sea.

WILDFIRE SEASON

Inhale scent of char,
air thick with burning
bark, miles of looming

white cedars. Asking
for it—stretched white
trunks for flames

to lick up. Blazes climbing
higher, starving embers
reach for starved leaves.

Thin flags wagging
down the Florida-Georgia
line, plumes for a black

welcome sign . . . When
the weather channel
stops forecasting wildfires,

all I can smell are bones
ground into coquina streets.
A walk along the bay

that night brings whispers
of a singed town, pillaged
again and again,

coral and barnacle blues.
Here comes salt rain
with no resolution.