

it is implicit you will not touch a painting. risk marring the charcoal of a sketch. leave the oil of your skin to tarnish bronze. chip the ridges of caked-on paint or pull threads from the canvas back. I had thought this was implicit. but here I am, rusting and threadbare, chipped and blurry. so I will say.

DO NOT TOUCH THE ARTWORK

I have been a careful, patient  
tender. I have spent too long  
too close to my broken parts  
today. The edges catch. Once  
slow and kind, my hands ask to  
grab hot steel and slam it into  
the iron stove, again and again  
and again. I don't. But such  
violence hides in my body. I  
wonder where it goes when I  
ask it to go home.

*fireside*

you know :: you cannot be serious :: as much as you  
want :: to stop worse yet :|: you might be hard to share  
with others :: your uncontrollable skin :: can cause  
serious damage :|: the most severe plague ::  
helplessness :|: to stop despair :: fingers flex splinters ::  
bulge rawed skin :: perhaps habits are :: body-focused  
harm :|: some feel pleasurable :: aware in:dependent :| |:

*a primer on habit*

*ON THE SIDEWALK*

most animals eat each other alive

my eyes could not align color into shape

blurred teeth and feet

such everyday consuming

i watched a yellowjacket shear open a grasshopper

leaf-shaded as if a storybook tea

until the grasshopper

stopped kicking you know the kick

the yellowjacket<sup>1</sup>

which did not sting once

cleaved off two thick back legs

and devoured them

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<sup>1</sup> Yellowjackets, often mistaken for bees<sup>2</sup>, are actually a type of predatory wasp, capable of inflicting multiple stings and entirely carnivorous in diet. Some more aggressive species mark victims to pursue them.

<sup>2</sup> This is not dissimilar to how your father is often mistaken for a father.

*HOW TO HEAL FROM BRAINWASHING AND REGAIN  
CONTROL OF YOUR MIND*

This is  
how they  
make you  
question  
your perception

learn how they  
make you hide

your pain can help convince you  
better than voices of  
your surreal world

*you can heal from (here can you heal?) from you can heal  
you from heal can heal you can from you you can heal from*

you can

detach

if other people  
silence your  
telling of it

an animal neither squid  
nor octopus  
when threatened  
will bite off the tips  
of its bioluminescent  
arms and jet away from  
those lying beacons

*You will feel your mind false*

*as you come to accept  
now  
the end of the story*

*Today*

(I have never heard  
if they regrow)

## ARIANNE TRUE

**Arianne True** (Choctaw, Chickasaw) is a queer poet and folk artist from Seattle. She teaches and mentors with Writers in the Schools (WITS), the Seattle Youth Poet Laureate program, and the Young Writers Cohort. Arianne has received fellowships from Jack Straw and the Hugo House and is a proud alum of Hedgebrook and of the MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts. She's currently working on *exhibits*, a book-length manuscript of experimental, experiential poems, and the poems here are all from the work in progress. You can find more on her website at [www.ariannetrue.com](http://www.ariannetrue.com).