

CLINCH

The floor through the eggshell
mattress, the whole apparatus
of the fan humming metal on metal.

The protective face shakes
against its linchpins.
The blades grate on their axle.

One of the blades is bent
and conjures the wind
to voices in the funnel of an ear

swirling as a blur of waving arms
and bloodshot eyes and Matt
with his shirt off

the TV on in the background
and everyone surrounding

me and Nicky in the den
insisting we throw punches at each other's heads

only Nicky can't yet focus his rage
because he's younger
how I'm younger than Matt

and he barrels ahead red-faced
and full of tears with his arms wide
while I punch metronomically

as he approaches again
and again
flailing at angles

with his shoulders I don't
let close enough for him to land one
on the back of the head, or hug.

PAVEMENT

On the uplift
over the pavement
under my shoe soles and the tips
of my fingers reaching
something
they didn't even need
to reach after
a pint
of liquor
and a few lines
and the tip
of a cigarette dipped
in coke and lit
it was really working.
I was gliding through a perpendicular world.
Everything was right angled
to the shithole way I felt
night after night
in a red-papered bathroom with a key
cutting my losses.
Hours
of dog songs
and immortal television
smearing a balm across.

MUZAK

All the novelties of american ardor
are tanning themselves poolside
dragging their salt hides
from lounge chair to lounge chair

and sipping trophy cocktails
despite the prohibitive martini sign
beside the drawing of the breakneck diver
and unaccompanied children who wail

from the second dimension for a mother
or an uncle or a friendly
stranger to wrap a towel around
their dripping suits and shivers

and lead them out of the high-locking fence
beyond which anything can happen

MESS

I haven't ever not
messed things
breaking
or stealing or operating
a vehicle too intoxicated
to walk properly

mess at a party
on a trampoline
anemic and no sleep
the shop van crashed
blamed
on the mercedes guy

and hundreds of miles at a time
asleep anywho
when not
and better thinking not
fucked up
I am a stopped

funnel mushrooming
in sheet rushes
of rash and numbness
ground
steel in a blackout
sleeping

train sleeping
work skipped broken
finger in
the polishing wheel
missed reading
fucked them over

finished that batch of stainless
several psychotropics
stabilizers lithium and I

would fix my eyes
to straight flat angles
running the variable speed

over long rectangle
of steel after long
rectangle of steel
the grinder
if not kept flat swaying
the plane

so I worked the whole
panel an eighth
inch down to level
the mistake
and wore the new
unusable dimension flat

WASH

When I'm out on the floor of the restaurant working
and describe the source and flavor of Forever
Roasted Pig, I think of my father
working on a scaffold in a warehouse room
adjacent to the killing floor
in another dimension in 1970s central Florida
where he lifts and lowers
himself on the scaffold to hover
around the inverted carcass of a cow
and skin it with a huge pneumatic knife.

He'll come home and my mother will loathe
the smell that keeps them fed
and she'll ask him to shower
again as if between night shifts
it could ever come completely out.

ALL NITE

I love this huge
matron abusing
her skinny cook
to whip
an egg cream up
in the diner
on a scalene island
by the soda plant.

She implores
through the portable
in her thick Queens
to bring the dawgies down here, yeah,
and bring their bowls.
What I don't need
I don't know.

They have real buttery waffles with fake butter.
They have fuzzy amber affinities between wallpaper
and lightbulbs. I've been awake
so long now light weighs
my pupils into dowels
bracing me and what I'm looking at.

THREAD

On a phantom spool someone has spun the slack from my life
and waits around the corner with it as a tripwire.

No one notices you falling when you sink slowly always
a little further down into the couch and driver's seat

until one day you will just refuse to rise again
and the world will have to move around and

around and leave you little pieces on your delta as it passes.

DAVID HUTCHESON

David Hutcheson is a poet living in the Hudson River Valley. He has received fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. His poems can be found in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *No Tokens*, and *Ploughshares*.