NORTH FORK SOL DUC RIVER

He is ripping out his hair again

cormorant-feather strands soak the pocked linoleum, heavy heat traps summer blackflies between mesh and glass,

the kitchen festers.

I saw his body bend on one side

a milk tooth snapping,

the sapling

not green enough to give.

Caught the killdeer in his throat

to leave in the mournful cavity of my mournful chest

—like the yellow dog thrashing through green water to retrieve downed fowl the day his father took us duck hunting—

the ragged loneliness stirs.

My skin broke light like precious glass,

a vampire drinking its own blood

the firestarter and the jumper,

so selfish

I could pry the whale bone from his teeth,

eat the ocean from his heart,

I cannot help it.

An agoraphobe loves the house they'll die in,

destroy-before-abandon,

the alien moon that orbits

a missing tooth in the antimatter, space no longer inhabited.

The body will succumb,

and the river?

The river smells cold

he swears he'll never smoke menthols

just Luckies,

old school to the brittle bone.

A ghost in the light, a turning axis turning on itself again. At lunch under the Sitka spruces,

he says there are surgeons who slice with obsidian blades thin as a singular atom,

You wouldn't even feel it the incision moves through the emptiness of the body,

a deepwater wave, sixteen hundred feet tall, that leaves only stillness in its wake.

I am afraid of deep-sea storms heaving miles below.

Here, taste this sweet I slice a sour apple so thin

the segments become membranes

exchanging water between me

and the hateful cells

of his sacred body.

BUTCH (For Leslie Feinberg)

in june bodies move underwater, such shimmering creatures.
S, the powdered moth-wing femmes, and me- greasy out-of-towner, queer.

he dances me into his bedroom & we strip, pick out virus-colored party drips. i've never worn men's clothes i didn't steal but these feel alright.

cruise million-dollar neighborhoods on silver ankle-breaker scooters, the old spanish style, red roof tile, a swamp-pooled house sits empty.

runt of the pack, i climb through windows toothed with broken glass. the abandoned house was sinking, a lung overfilled with black water or treasure. A room of broken dolls, pounds of medical records– bad cancer, *The World According to Garp*.

i stumble home half past the dew point, sweating in his clothes, feebly fighting with my chopped haircut. tonight, i sleep in the heat dreaming in languages i can never quite understand,

that have words for someone like me, and when i wake i will be different. I will be a brother, a shimmering butch or a silver sunfish, never quite breaking the surface

or passing through.

VARSITY

Her curved karambit face coaxes a stomach open and open. Lit by blue static snow, the tv says texas forever the tv says let's touch God this time, boys.

Nothing left in the bottle but her eyelash, or rusting in the driveway but a body buried under the Silverado.

It's five in the morning and we have practice tonight. We'll blow our knees out for real this time, run ourselves into the ground till the tunings snap and the mosquitoes find us.

She knots fishbones into her oil spill hair, chain-smoking end to end to end in the front seat saying, *Yeah*, *now we're going somewhere, yeah*. The Silverado sits on cinder blocks and says nothing.

Let's shoot ourselves and bury our bodies in the back garden beneath the wild blackberry swath, let's cook a fatty dinner and lick up the frying pan. We'll play hard tonight like gladiators gasping till they're just dogs in mud.

We were two live wires in a shallow pool, every touch left the bottom of my feet charred black. We can't stand each other, but she never cuts her nails and I like having my spine scratched.

LOW ORBIT

You, shooting down old satellites from the open window of your dad's salt-bitten truck.

They make lonely sounds falling into dark swimming pools and neat fingers of whiskey,

Hello Pioneer-

Hello Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine Hello E.

Softly it goes— the hand-hewn body, the weakened shakes of going clean. I could be safe at your hip,

but you're scared of becoming an alcoholic so you'll never stop drinking.

All stitches wetly cut with nail clippers exhaling into the lanugo of your green mohair.

The colors will never be right again—

but I wear it each winter after you, when

every fallen star is Sputnik with a bullet in her chest, every icicle turns to flowstone and brings the roof down.

For the longest time we were

fat happy children roving the hotlands, the street signs written in Nadsat, having never tasted a cold night north of Anaheim.

Your mother mourned and missed you, your sister disappeared.

And me

And me

wondering if it is Mars I'm seeing

in the naked sky after a whiteout,

Or just Red-Eye 1 (Pinot, Merlot, Cabernet).

Either way, I don't have a glove big enough to catch it in its plummet.

PANSY WRITES A LOVE POEM

(After Nico Alvarado's Tim Riggins Reads the Scarlet Letter)

No one should ever try to get better.

Not even you.

Your heart is all alone, out there in the wildit's got wolves and goshawks

waiting to make a run at you.

Your heart is raw meat, scratched-off nickel

and

blood

and

blood

and

blood.

and

Your heart is on the table shooting up ephedrine, reading girly mags, dirty bunny slippers on its feet.

Your heart hates my heart because my heart has a sensitive stomach and an acid-burnt throat. Your heart pulls the ripcord

in my heart's chest to see

a fabulous explosion of fabulous goreyour heart watches too much Chainsaw Man.

My heart goes to the doctor, who looks at the x-rays, sees its ground-glass lungs

says, "kid, you better start digging." He means a grave.

My heart screams and the neighbors shut their blinds,

my heart can sing voodoo child,

can read minds
and
weep
and
weep
and
weep.

No one should ever try to fall in love. Not even you. Not even your heart.

It will seep all over you.

CARSON YOUNG

Carson Young is a poet, storyteller, and artist. His twin interests in poetry and biology are diffused in the same solvent: a fascination with the body. His writing seeks to interrogate the enmeshed nature of queerness/transness, eating disorders, catholic mythology, and surrealism.

Young returns to the topic of catholicism again and again in his work. He describes a deep appreciation for the phrase "passion" in all its meanings—a form of love, a method of suffering, a place of fantasy and storytelling. He graduated from the University of California Santa Barbara with a BA in Writing & Lit. Currently, he is a graduate student and teaches in the First Year Writing Program at Emerson College in Boston. He has two pet rats named Fuse and Juice.