

After the Ark

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The Heart, Like a Bocce Ball

The jack sits low in the grass. We're dead drunk,
cannonballing across the lawn, gouging
handful divots, each of us still nursing
a tumbler of scotch brought home from the wake.
We sons and brothers and cousins. I spin
my ice and let that black-tie loosening
buzz swarm. The others choose the sky, looping
pop-flies that swirl with backspin, an earthen
thud answering grunts while the soft dirt caves.
I bowl instead, slow-ride hidden ridges—
the swells buried beneath the grass—carving
a curve, a line from start to stop, finish.
The heart, like a bocce ball, is fist-sized
and firm; ours clunk together, then divide.

Vulture Tree

We were never so holy, and apples
in the ministers' orchard rot the same.
Back grove and the black birds drying their wings:
my brother and I hurling cores, flinging
all we could find at them: pocked crabapples,
pinecones, rocks. We'd step away to test our range.
If we ever came close, they might unroost
and rustle branches, letting the loose fruit

fall. Early spring, the tree kept on dying:
knobs, like tumors, jutting from the crotches,
the bark bitten and peeled from our attacks.
And the tree's skeleton sank, the grey sky
seeming heavier. The birds still watched us:
dependable and certain, steadfast-black.

Kachemak Bay Water Taxi

These nights of gunmetal daylight,
I feel drowning in my sleep,
the whirring mosquitoes tiny swells

rising against my tent's nylon hull.
What meanest thou, O sleeper,
O gringo dreaming of the sea?

People remember the story of Jonah,
but forget Nineveh, the utter end
of a place after that great fish's ribs,

Nineveh, where Jonah went to preach,
where he went and asked God
to die, cursing gourds and sackcloths.

We are not cattle, he seemed to say.
The driver calls walruses sea-cows.
I look for them off the bow and see

only killers swimming underneath.
Glaciers tongue horizon. Icebergs turn.
Cormorants stretch their necks.

I duck into the cabin, ask
for another lap around Gull Rock,
floating a bill into the tip jar, squinting

through windows thick with fingerprints.