

# CutBank

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## Trials

Nance Van Winckel

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*Trials**By Water*

Whatever fills her with air  
fills us with loathing.  
Her head's in a chink  
in a wave, a bouyant  
annoyance. We don't expect her  
to drop, to touch a good heel  
on the bottom and stand there, breathless,  
while we consider rescue.

*By Fire*

We give him three days  
to heal his bandaged hands  
from the inside out. Then  
we'll assume he did nothing:  
never held the wrong hand  
or touched the wrong horse  
or wrapped his palms,  
because we said to,  
around a red-hot poker.

*By Combat*

If he walks enough paces  
into the future, we'll grant him  
a second, someone to cock his pistol  
since his hands shake so,  
since he's claiming he can't win  
at what he's never done before.  
if we see through the sunup  
the head plugged just there, mid-brow,  
we'll believe he's done well,  
a lucky first strike, here and now.

*By Jury*

The witnesses have that look  
in their eyes. So we've got one  
too, like we've all seen a bad thing  
before, like we're about to clean up  
what's been left on our lawns:  
paper through the trees, toys  
in a mudpile. The hundred stories  
hunch up; they all sound good.  
Then she turns to face us  
with the face that comes to us  
from dreams we thought we'd abandoned,  
the face that pleads again for mercy.

*Nance Van Winckel*