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HER WATERCOLOR DEPRESSION

CASSANDRA SEVIGNY

She brews her own
because she likes to see
sepia seeping up.
She cannot sleep so she
needs coffee to keep her eyes –
brown ringed around soft green
– awake.

At night I am the coffee bean
ground up, pressed through a film of paper,
cleaner and clearer when I speak.
Not so gritty, because
it might give her heartburn
if I had no filter.

Instead my lips hide behind tense,
monitored silence.
Words swell and slip from my eyes,
eyes she does not see
because it molds her like clay,
folds her into a ball,
turns her away from me.

So I go home
where her ears cannot see me,
and her eyes cannot hear me,
no one can hear me
and my hands, my eyes, my lips
all speak at once.

Hot drops squeeze from my eyes,
drowning irises blue
(concentrated at the curved edges
and dripping in toward the black hole).
I didn't ask for them to come
but I don't fight—

the loops and spikes I penned to the page, dissolving
blue separating into motionless ripples of color,
tinged dark at the ragged edges and bleeding
through the bleached and pounded tree pulp.
Paper, fragile skin, bruised but not yet
broken – I can save it if I'm careful.
Do not touch the salt-watercolor.
Words could snag and form tears.

Wait—
give her time, and do not leave her.
She knows you are there
though she does not see. On the worst days,
I have seen her – she spits.
But tomorrow she will smile,
and her eyes will thank me for the note I left
on her desk saying “I love you.”
Though we will speak not a word of it.