

## A Big Dangerous Something

The windows in the house are all clamped shut  
Against the nostril-burning, paint thinner wretch of sucker control.  
The men in the neighbor's field dressed in white bio suits  
Fitted teal gloves, white masks  
Meandering around the broad tobacco leaves like a squadron  
Of lost surgeons searching for the frail, sick bodies  
They need to work their healing.  
I take a cold cheeseburger, left over from the 4<sup>th</sup> of July  
Out of the fridge and eat it with onions and pickles  
On a soft, egg washed bun and feel trapped  
Even though it's overcast and I hadn't wanted to go outside anyway.  
I can feel the insects in the backyard taking to ground  
Wriggling back into the safety of deep dirt.  
When I was employed by one of these old tobacco farms for a summer  
I was sent one afternoon to pick up a worker who had been accidentally left  
Alone and unaware on the edge of town  
In a field that was about to be doused in pesticide from a plane.  
I raced across the narrow country roads in the lurching pickup  
Fishtailing and leaning on the horn with the whole length of my arm.  
I rocketed down the rough dirt path that wound through  
That back forty and I thought I might flip the damn truck  
Bucking as it was, like a bronco  
My tailbone smacking down on the hard seat  
Stones banging the undercarriage and suddenly the man appeared  
Running as if out of a portal from underneath the white tent cloth  
Smacking the tremendous green leaves out of his face.  
I threw open the passenger door.  
He jumped inside just as the plane descended on its first low arc.  
In a panic of reflex he locked the door.

I didn't know this man from Adam but  
I grabbed his forearm and he let me.  
The veins in his arms were thick with the heat  
Of hours of tightening the loosened tent pins above his head.  
We watched together, silent  
Ensconced in the safe ball of the truck's cab  
Holding onto each other awkwardly like a couple on a first date  
As the plane flew in low again and again  
Releasing its payload in neat, practiced columns.  
We sat in the vortex of that wet death from above  
Marveling at the simple ease of it, as innocuous looking  
As a fine mist of water—  
A suburban sprinkler on a patchy lawn, tired parents gripping  
Golden beers and children's dripping hair shining in the sun  
Or a cool summer shower after a sunburn, scent of coconut and lime  
An evening of watching game shows, fan on high, pulling a loose  
Sundress away from pinching skin.  
We sat in the middle of it, a big dangerous something  
That looked like absolutely nothing  
And that day, in my life, was a day for the books.  
That day I found, stumbling around, impossibly, a body under the leaves  
And I worked my healing magic.  
It was not supposed to happen  
There were no years of training  
No grace or valor to it  
But I saved a man.  
That day I earned the good oxygen of the breath I took in  
And the Earth forgave me  
For walking the way I did back then, cold and sometimes hateful  
Across her beautiful face.