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The Vernal Pool

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Three Poems

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Journal

The Vernal Pool, 4(1)

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Publication Date

2017

DOI

10.5070/V341033310

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Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

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THREE POEMS



THE VERNAL POOL

ISSUE SIX, FALL 2017

Next of Kin

It's the end of September and cold.

The smell of iron clings

to the breeze of central heat.

You had forgotten that his blood

pooled into the floor vent,

spread between the tile grout

until the EMTs arrived.

It's strange the way iron doesn't smell

like death, but bitterness, the kind you

felt when the surgeon's marbled eyes

convinced you he was gone.

Twelve hours later you scrub

the lumps of his brain matter

that cling to the porcelain sink

in the bathroom of your shared home.

You are his brother, bound by blood

shed in the alleyways between broken homes.

His family, the ones you haven't seen in years,

wait in the hall. Knock softly, ask you if you're done.

You scrub harder until the porcelain peeks through.

Snow Crabs are Benevolent Beings

The fish, that are not snakes, slither through the sand. Sidewinders, winding their way through the desert. Every third solstice they shed their skin-sheathes: always after midnight, but before the sea-gulls swell to cry. They do not see the skin-sheathes they leave summersault like tumble weeds into the horizon for they do not have eyes. They are dark beings whose bodies bulge with cactus leaves they have gorged. The female-fish (who are not snakes) find these bulges attractive. In the month of August, they can smell the secretions of the bulges for up to two miles. The spikes smell like milk, although the fish are both lactose-intolerant and, also, not mammals. In the dead heat, female-fish will flop for miles to find a decent spike to mate with. Eggs plop out of bored holes into the sand. Within 37 hours their eggs tumble through the sanded grooves into a nest of air-brushed fish-flakes at the bottom of a dune. Their mothers slip away in the daylight. By the process of divine intervention some will be swallowed by snow crab missionaries. They will sing wind-whispers and wait for the newborn fish to chew their way out from their stomachs. They swim off, carving a mandala in the sand around the

snow crab's burnt red wound of a womb. The fish do not look back. The fish do not have eyes. The fish are (thankless) creatures.

The Turbulence of Life(Lines)

The sharp suction of the oxygen mask on your face bites.
Your teeth dig into your bottom lip, grinding through the
seconds until you can breathe again. You wait for the
drugs to kick in.

The IV drips.

You're floating.
Away,
away,
away,
out of yourself.
Out of your fattened body
with the bloated ankles and
swollen wrists, cut
by red tags.

A contraction jolts you into the reality of bright lights and
the cold metal of bedside bars, warming under your palms.

It passes.

You're swooning (again) with the

drip,
drip
(rhythm of the drugs) ...

You think you see the surgeon, dressed all in white.

Your resolve:

starts
to
crumble

...

You're just about to blink the surgeon away when you feel the needle puncture the skin of your spine. He's cleaning up his supplies, humming, when you feel the tingling –

Sensation between
your legs.

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|---------------------|
| gasp | You | He is in |
| your way through | | your arms. Hideous |
| his crowning, | | and screeching, |
| but your shallow | | you press his tiny, |
| breaths cannot | | clenched body |
| push him | | between |
| from within | | your breasts, |
| your body. | | covered in |
| You take a | | dark blood, |
| deeper | | because |
| breath, | | the nurse |
| push hard, | | wasn't there |
| three times, and – | | to catch him and |

You had to
reach down between your
thighs and slip your trembling
fingers into the tiny pockets of
his armpits. You had to lift him into
the bright artificial lights so, he
wouldn't tumble out of you and
be caught by the turbulence
of the world.