

Aaron Smith

First Word

The football players called us
queer and the soccer players

called us queer

and the closeted queers called us
queer before they palmed our heads

in the damp freshmen dorm.

We let them. Thirsty

for our bodies to be
more than a word a mouth spits out

more than what they thought
we could swallow.

Reprobate

I was eleven with my shorts
shoved down to my ankles. I watched him
through the screen—shirtless, new
muscles, gripping the chain-link fence,
flirting with my sister
by the campground pool. His body
was more like my father's
than mine: hairy nipples, hairy armpits, his
furry belly made my ears turn red.
Splintered floor, slamming doors, my chest
as empty as the cabin I stood in
pretending all the things
I wasn't allowed to do with him.

Billy

fucked me in the closet joke

so obvious still he made it winter

in Massachusetts kept him

around longer than should have

when he rambled about his job did

math in my head $X + Y = \text{one}$

more story about refrigerator

repair hated when I sang

don't be a hero but got stuck in my

head when he gave me head his

dog cried at the door until I finished

Untitled Document

went to hotel to meet man
picked up different man in

lobby Irish flight attendant
couldn't make me come

maybe didn't want to
all men aren't same or are

subway home dick sticky
old fruit of the looms Insta-

fag with blasted abs new
Speedo sad can't wear

on vacation now that world
caught virus if gyms stay closed

personality not body is new
summer look doesn't know

if true he's screwed gay
pride goeth before a fall

Blast

one of my friends still goes to church he says it makes him feel better when I go I feel sadder than I do when I see a clown remember the Melissa Manchester song "Don't Cry out Loud" I wanted to feel Baby's pain when she took up with some clown in the circus I lip-synched it Wednesday nights when my parents let me stay home from church and made myself cry staring into the mirror I love how the relationship in the song is told through the conceit of a circus and how "clown" makes me think of a literal clown but also a shitty man my favorite part of a man is his bicep or maybe an Adam's apple when he swallows there are videos on YouTube of people who dress like clowns and chase people with baseball bats to scare them remember Charlene's song "I've Never Been to Me" I can quote the spoken part verbatim I tried on my mother's flowered nightgown with the lace collar when I was home alone in middle school and listened to it Manuel says the song was *saved by the camp of the gays' making* remember "All I Wanna Do Is Make Love to You" by Heart the sexy man in the foggy video I still know Marilyn Martin's harmony part when she sings "Separate Lives" with Phil Collins I used to like Phil Collins and his stupid song about homeless people "Alone" is my favorite Heart song my sister owned their cassette *Bad Animals* remember cassettes and rewinding and brown shiny tape twisted and ruined in the boombox I used to play songs on a boombox and sing for God in church I knew how to get saved and told people *Hey you know what paradise is* once my mom found makeup I'd hidden under the bed and said *I found your makeup you should be ashamed* and I was I met a woman who went to clown school I don't remember her being particularly funny she wrote poems and lives in Florida maybe I like a man's chest best or the blast of hair below a navel remember when clowns were creeping around woods in North Carolina



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