

Disarming

My psychologist says (don't you love
when poets start like this?)
she suspects
I've been neutralizing my brain
for years. You see,
this particular organ has a way
of fucking up time and space.
More than we'd like to think,
it doesn't store trauma right—
lets it stick in the hippocampus
when in actuality that shit
should have gone prefrontal cortex
deep years ago. Stress, after all,
feeds psychosis. *That*, she said
is why you need to write. I've been self-
medicating without the meds
my whole life. *What luck*,
(can you believe it?),
that all my drugs are free.

Place Settings

I've never belonged at any table,
but I pass
the salt and looked up

which fork to use
in an etiquette book.

All my family's dead so nobody's
left that knows there's an Indian
girl with a sick head
who grew up poor and sometimes
likes to fuck women gone
and snuck into this little fête.
They don't look too close

because I got no color
and haven't been homeless
in years. Taught myself how to talk
right with sitcoms—these days,
I only slip up sometimes. Usually,
when the drinks kick in or in catching

the smell of a fellow interloper,
overlooked uninvited guest. And we smile,
tight lips coating teeth because a feast
is always better when it's free

and a gorging
always sweeter for the starved.

Dominican Man

You want a Dominican man
to not be a Dominican man, act
like the culture's rinsed clean
off soon as the white gate
keepers say, *He did real good.*
You stack

that Dominican man up real high,
tangled parts and broken bits—
an effigy thirsty to burn. Take that
DR and saw the big R in half
so it don't roll no more. Trills are too hard
for some folks but *everyone*
respects a doctor. You say, *Dominican man,*
tell us how, but how

do you write & publish & sell
misogyny and machismo, forced
kisses and grabbing asses
if you don't live & breathe & be
it, too? Dominican man,

he opened doors wide
like young thighs—
and everyone loves a gentleman.

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