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Invisible Injuries

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INVISIBLE INJURIES

AMY CARTER-ISHMAEL

A Parting of Ways

WILLIAM VINCENT

Your mind is a room that smokes and burns,
And tears the upholstery that your mother owned.
With that dies the past, a taste thick and black,
and forgotten in the aftermath.

My word is a match that sets the spark,
And burns the brush, and signals the collapse.
Igniting the means, warring on your ends,
but both are forgotten in the aftermath.

Compass

JOAN CANBY

At thirteen years old I balanced astride my
3 speed Schwinn, stared towards the western
horizon where wild radishes, Indian paint
brush, lupine hid in carpets of yellow
mustard and red-tailed blackbirds flew
into the branches of Channel Island oaks.

Red smeared hashes of blood across his face
were still fresh from the night's fall when I
return home from school. Daddy took our
black Retriever, lifted her up, put a forepaw
into one of his cupped hands, pushed her,
prodded her into a dance across our oak floor.

I stared at my father -- afraid of the bourbon
on his breath, the scratch of his beard against my
cheek, I ignored his words -- "Honey, dance with
us," I leaned down on the living room floor, hugged
the books to my chest and waited for a new life.

Chumash Indians once gathered here, lovingly
laying Mariposa tulips and Shooting Star poppies
onto the eyelids of their dead before burying their bones
into the sacred meadows above the cliffs that
looked out to the sea. Today I will put an orchid
on his grave. I will set my compass for the meadow
where once I saw mustard, blackbirds and lupine
and face the evening's sunset and I'll dance for him.