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# NENA

CAMERON  
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# BLAME GAME

AFTER "DEGREES OF GREY IN PHILLIPSBURG"  
BY RICHARD HUGO

EMMA WINTERS

I think I'll go home for Thanksgiving this year.  
Say it's cause I'm lonely. The best two holidays  
Were ones I don't remember. I drank six shots  
Blacked out before the turkey, stuffing filled  
With salmonella, plates stacked up, the suction cup  
Of my great aunt's lipstick-covered kiss.  
Only she died last year. So that's  
One less mouth, that I need to avoid.

My recent change in physical health  
Is unknown. Blaming myself for the cigarettes  
Dad gave me, blaming myself for drinking,  
Blaming my broken body, the part of myself  
That I've never liked much anyway. One good  
Thing is that I won't be explaining this.  
The usual dinner, its drunken familial interactions,  
A forced ritual better than nothing—  
Forgotten by the time we're shopping,  
In a glitzed out Christmas mall at 4am  
To get a TV for spoiled me,  
As a gift, that won't be a surprise  
Because I'm seeing it in all its glory.

How will I die? Maybe the stress  
Will do it before the vices? Isn't that question  
A paradox, the stress happening also to be  
A vice too: especially if it killed me?  
What if I died? Would that  
Or my body hold up a good turkey,  
Not the cooking, but the  
Eating that day, does death stop holiday  
Feasts or coldly furnish forth the table  
We've eaten at for the last six years?

Curse under your breath. The worst words, I  
Know I'm a bastard, works well  
Unless you get caught. Someday soon,  
Dad says, You'll thank me for all I taught you.  
I tell him no. You're lying to yourself  
The cigarettes never made me into a man.  
It was my fancy corporate job,  
Even if it does suck, that made  
And kept me the ideal ladies man  
Sleeping around and telling no one about the chemo.