
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.