

Light as a Feather Stiff as a Board

When we played it at a sleepover Jackie's house fifth grade it worked
five girls held me (dream come true) up to the ceiling
in the foyer with only their pointer and middle fingers our hands
so lesbian all of our ring fingers longer than our indexes
Some knew what lesbians were then but didn't know the finger thing
No one accused me of admiring of looking of loving of anything
I put on my pajamas in the bathroom tried not to notice anyone's bra stayed
in my own sleeping bag I had heard the name *Matthew Shepard* When I
think about being queer there is always violence I always think
violence intrusive as acne then I was in love with Liz that year no maybe
it was Alyssa When a lesbian writes a poem it's a lesbian poem

Selfie as a Dyke

The problem with being a dyke
is standing in front of your mirror,
naked, feeling both admiration
and shame for the woman in front of you,

who locks eyes with you, looks you up
and down, walks away. The problem
with being a dyke is the glances you get
in the women's room on a Monday morning

on the fourteenth floor of your office building,
or on a Friday night at the local bar,
your local bar, where *you* drink vodka sodas,
play “Cowboy Take Me Away” on repeat,

throw darts, eat a basket of fries. The problem
is the double takes you catch sight of
while you wash your hands, your eyes darting
like a pinball—you do not want women

to feel unsafe, to feel like you're looking at them
the way men look at them, because they can tell
you're a dyke, which is much different than a man,
but you can see it in their faces like a headline,

as these strangers consider
Should I be afraid? Do you belong here?

You do. You tell yourself you do
because you do. Your girlfriend

shaves your head and though you are
sometimes mistaken for a boy,
you are still a woman,
just a different kind, a dyke.

Your friend helped you get comfortable
with the word by calling herself one so often.
Dyke. The problem with being a dyke
is men, is your father,

whom you text once in a while
because he's your father, and you want
to like him, so you try to talk
about "safe" topics with him, the weather

in Pittsburgh vs. the weather in Cincinnati,
your promotion at work,
but then he'll say something unrelated
to the rain or your administrative responsibilities,

tell you to vote for T***p, tell you that you're a challenge,
but he won't give up on trying to undo
what your liberal arts education did to you,
because you still come from a Good Catholic Family,

and you still have Good Catholic Parents,
and it is at this point you realize
here is but another poem about your father,
and how although the bathroom, the hallways,

the world, is full of homophobia and transphobia,
you feel it most when you so much as look at him,
his eyes darting, too, his mouth
unable to say the word *daughter*.