SHANNON FARRELL

The Mourning After

Laughing voices make way to crowded
harmony,
wane to underwater drone, then
fade to black.

Light
stabs at eyelids, forcing them to retreat
In races equal parts light and confusion
I stop breathing, to feel the place where
am I.
In bed (thoughts shout too loudly for this
time of day
at this revelation)
balled in stringy, green blanket,
naked,
If not for the checkerboard pattern,
etched by the blanket threads
stuck with sweat to my skin.
My skin, in my green blanket, in
(confusion dissipates)
my bed, in my room, and everything
(confusion remasses)
drenched in smell that is
not mine.

Rolling out of green blanket,
hit the floor stumbling,
through the door, to the shower,
(tripping on tangled sheet trailed across the
doorway)
The first steps wake unfamiliar stabs of
soreness
starting somewhere inside and slithering
upwards into stomach
where waves of anxiety pretend to be
something else
and for the moment, I am fooled.

Forty minutes worth of hot water
can’t clear the lingering smell
of someone else
but clears my thoughts enough to wonder
why everything seems
awry

and the sharp ache inside me
throbs a persistent reminder not to forget
something
I can’t remember
but might have something to do with the
bruises
that are developing in the hot water
on each arm.

Returning to room,
I am careful not to trip on strewn sheets
(some clothes, too).
Talking out loud to myself, I think
somehow that will provoke clear thinking.
It makes me think, “Maybe I am crazy,” and
I laugh out loud
jarringly enough that the confusion retreats
to reveal the outlines of memory,
Single frames,
bits of film on a cutting room floor.

Reassembly comes slowly but surely;
pieces are missing
(“But it’s okay,” I think, because usually
you can still see the general picture)
so I step back
to take a look.

Knees buckle and body falls into a crumpled
pile
next to the strewn sheets and clothes.
Eyes remain focused on the picture
finally assembled.
I close them but the picture looms
and I can again feel the weight of his arms
bearing down
where the bruises appeared.

Shannon Farrell lives in California.