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THE MOCKINGBIRD

Beth Turner Ayers

Necessity brought me here.
I had preconceived notions
Of Texas.
How appropriate, I thought.
The mockingbird perches
In a representative pose
As it mimics, yes mocks,
Inducing false hope
With its imitation of reality,
With unnatural voices.
Prolific, deceptive voices:
The cowboy want-to-be
Cheerleader moms
The voice of the Old South
"Ya'll come back ya' hear,"
If deemed acceptable.
I expected red-neck voices.
The real cowboy is extinct.

But years absorb cynicism
I now marvel at the mockingbird,
Texas bird.
No longer does it mimic.
It whistles the ultimate complement,
The flattery of reproduction.
It sings with its own voice,
Momentarily mistaken for another.
It is genuine; it is unique.
Offering a vast variety.
Preconceived notions evaporate.
How appropriate, I think.
The mockingbird was chosen,
Delegated to high status,
Its unequalled song covers the state
That absorbed the cowboy.
Necessity keeps me here
But I don't mind.

ALL GOOD THINGS

Katie Fitzrandolph

The terracotta plant saucer turned ashtray
on the balcony filled with rain water and created
a butt swimming pool murky with nicotine.
"That's a lot of cigarettes," J said
"You can tell Russ has been here"
But it wasn't just Russ's 27s,
there were the occasional No. 9s
in their hot pink bathing suits
flirting with the new guy Crush's
splashing up reminders of the whirlpool
week, sleepless night early morning
conversations, vices and family secrets,
long eye catches and new kisses.
I took a drag, flicked, listened
to the exciting sizzle and thought
about the moment when the clouds
would suck up the last drop of giddy
moisture and leave a corpse beach
of dried up ordinary old smokes.

it is genuine, it is unique . . .

BRONZE - BLACK BIRD Suzanne Hess

