

THE TERRIBLE WORD

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About the Author

Shane Carreon is author of the poetry collections, *travelbook* (2013) and *Then, Beast* (forthcoming) and a recipient of the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature, the Nick Joaquin Literary Award, and SUNY Binghamton 2016 AWP Intro Journal Awards for Poetry. Her works recently appear in *Veils, Halos and Shackles: International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women* and is forthcoming in *Callisto: A Queer Fiction Journal*. She is a faculty at UP Cebu and is currently on Fulbright Scholarship at SUNY Binghamton

THE GOAT

after L. Gutierrez's "*Childhood Pain*"

Father slaughtered a goat
on my ninth birthday to remember
losing mother.
The sun was bright. The sound of chickens
clawing the ground for worms,
my sister cutting leeks,
and the goat, no bigger than I was,

calling for help. I was afraid
of blood and sorry for its fate...so I ran
to the river where my friends were
laughing and digging mud, burying
beetles. Did the rushing
river drown the sound of my name?
My sister appeared, gasping.
Father, she said,
is looking for you. I knew what it meant.
The bamboo in his hand.

Who was it screaming
so hard it tore the air? What was it
that whipped and whipped.
I heard my sister's cries, somewhere
beyond my ears, mother's as well.
The goat's, too, from the gut
like mine.

Father was very strong. He dragged me by the hair.
Who screams

for my body?

I felt a body

pushed down the stairs. I felt a body
on the kitchen floor. *Whose is this
limp and dull I pulled to the wide cornfield?*

The corn were already grown, taller than I was.
I cried, until it was dark
and I was afraid to be alone.
So I returned home.

FATHER'S BIRTHDAY

My father's birthday yesterday, I remembered but chose
Not to say anything. The backstory is long,
An unlit hallway echoing of stroking hands
In a partially closed room not far

From where most people stay to admire the garden
We keep, among others. Stoicism is plenty,
So is civility. The surfaces clear, spotless from
Hostility as a glass table. Mother expected me to call

Because I was supposed to
Be grateful after Steven, love of my life, sat in the patio;
Father on the wicker chair, eyes half closed;
Mother, pruning.

She must be upset, not replying to the message I left
Today like an afterthought, pretending forgetfulness.
Of course, she knows and has chosen
Not to remember. My poor brave mother

Whose fecund dreams must have been as bright as she
Was before bearing an only child, son so similar
To the father who, in darkness, bears his fruit.

SALVACION STREET

The days before I was twelve,
Salvacion was the asphalt road
extending past
the neighborhood homes,
the generations-long Three Sisters
Store, Chapel of Fatima,
the vulcanizing shop
and beyond,
the tamarind tree with its old
weathered rope hanging loose.
And farther still,
through mangroves and fields
of coastal rocks
at the end of the island.
Sea.

The days before I was twelve,
tambis flowers fell
whenever the wind blew
outside my bedroom windows.
And while the rest of the family
watched on afternoon TV
the striking man kissing
the dainty woman,
I climbed out to escape siesta.

Soon, I would know the terrible
word between love.
But at that moment,
I held onto the handlebars
And pedalled my way to shore.