

# CutBank

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Volume 1  
Issue 51 *CutBank* 51

Article 6

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Spring 1999

## Restraint

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### Recommended Citation

Dumanis, Michael (1999) "Restraint," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 51 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss51/6>

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**RESTRAINT**

When my mother dies,  
endlessly, on some near evening,

I must do everything  
mourners do: scream,

cut up my hair and her shoes,  
let our neighbors unlearn us.

I must pass time.  
I must pass lots of time

in the commodious white  
of the bed which conceived of me.

I have to memorize Ruth  
and recite her,

backwards, to haphazard Hebrews.  
I must learn Hebrew

and worship some gods.  
I must buy slaughterhouse futures.

I must watch flies fly into beards.  
I must believe

in my future and stay  
fetal for days, self-importantly.

I must believe in Thermopylae,  
the Defenestration of Prague.

I must read more about the life  
of Rutherford B. Hayes.

I must carol, *meiosis*, *mitosis*  
and not let my eyes glaze.

I must divide complex fractions  
until I grow weary.

I must devise  
games to make myself wary.

I must run bare  
through the crowded gymnasium

with a geranium jammed  
into the crook of each ear.

I must stum wine.  
I must stum lots of wine.

I must pass lots of time.  
I must pass time.

I must not drag  
my ill skin to the hearse,

worn from the need  
to make love

to her truant, calm body.  
I will not carve gods. I lack

knives and authority.