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Not an Exit

Lorri Bethel

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NOT AN EXIT

Lorri Bethel

The bleeding started
in the first month
of the thirteenth year,
with power

and howling
for a childhood
that never was,
for safety from

the groping hands,
shame, filthy core,
swinging dicks
blood and gore,

closed, locked doors,
the pounding,
the screaming,
the not letting in,

the drowning,
in the wine glass
of the mother
who never was,

the not listening,
the not knowing,
the not wanting
to know,

the big door shutting:
orange rejection,
the clicking lock,
peeing in the bushes.

Not an exit.
Run and keep on
running until
it is far enough.

They are coming,
are here inside,
they are outside
and upside-down,

hanging from
the monkey bars,
hanging from the
private parts.

They are in you,
your panties,
your squirming legs

your dreams.

Not an exit.
Just a detour,
a blinding shot
to the jaw,

to the vein, the gut,
the heart, the soul,
to the footlights,
the stripper's pole.

Polaroid pictures
in the precinct
of black eyes
and, black souls,

the cracking
of teeth, bones,
hearts - all instruments
dead and alive

that play this song
over and over and over
for the power
and the glory,

forever and ever

Amen.