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## The Bassoonist

His was a life that ached for form early on It needed something outside to rhyme with what it was something it could leave behind later

And so he played bassoon because bassoon, like life, was hard No one, hardly, played it so he was in great demand

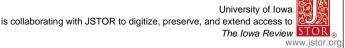
The sound it made (we knew this) was really just his body honking against the twilight it already belonged to

-a winged thing getting not quite off the ground calling to the other flying things to *wait* 

The face the double reed disappeared into was pocked well cratered really For its red and purple hues there is no word but *angry* 

He read the notes barely through a curtain of stringy hair But our quintet couldn't be a quintet without him

which gave to his life a certain necessity lasting through a very long series of rehearsals made even longer because his ideas about



rhythm were rather original and he had to be convinced

by the band director singing right into his ear how his part went

I don't remember now how I first found out that his ugliness was guaranteed to kill him before he turned thirty

Thirty today, that field of volcanoes then the knubby lips then the chewed straw of the double reed appear to me again

The face is still that pool a small boy has fired fistfuls of pebbles into —He is that boy That pond is his own face

What self can do to self scares me still But now I also wonder why a shame so deep it burrows inward through the face

and sucks at you from underneath for the brief time forever is fell to this boy to be our first example of

When the band took to the field in our neat red blazers we felt him among us, out of step like a bad cell A bassoon is too delicate isn't it to march with in the rain So for a pretty price all of us cut him off and didn't miss him

Not when we reshuffled into a quartet and couldn't find music for just flute clarinet oboe horn

Not when we saw him propped in the bleachers gazing on our formations with a scrambled contempt Not even when we saw the returned bassoon

dismembered snug in its velvet casket