

NICOLE MEIERHOFER

**Underneath Castles**

I am white wrapped and hungry,  
So  
I pull  
in circles  
to release my tongue,  
the spit built up,  
opens my sticky lips  
and I pull in an angry breath.

I circle with my arm around my head,  
until my nostrils are caught open.  
They are stuffed with dripping cotton  
so I pull it out slow,  
lunging forward like my stomach is sorry.  
Then my airways are free  
and I smell the musty walls.

Finally my eyes are sought  
and peeled forward by the gauze.  
I reach for dampness from the walls  
to wipe them,  
and as my pupils surface  
from lit pressure,  
I am blurred with the milky sight  
of a mirror.  
I hold onto the gauze in a glare  
and point to her mossy tear  
saying  
Speak or wrap me up again.

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**Kneading Beasts**

My house is a hammock  
that cups my back.  
Citronella close by  
blistering mosquitoes  
that hover from the lake.

I journal on bread,  
watching dolphins  
coil up for the slaughter  
as horses emerge  
knee-high,  
water wasted  
and stocked for the feast.

The dolphins begin to fist-fight  
selling their kingdom  
to the gods  
of the carcasses.  
But waves carry  
fish and butter  
foaming the shores edge  
and the stallions stand  
scattered and fat,  
sucking their teeth.

I rise from hammock ropes,  
hurry to the sandy bank  
and caper a stallion.  
I kick hard  
sinking naked feet into its stomach,  
toes massaging the belly dolphin  
and ride unbridled  
into a shore-side tree.

The horse drops to the ground  
and I to its backside  
to birth the dolphin,  
so we can share a meal  
of black-maned flesh.

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English department at St. Cloud State University.*

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**Not A Hobby Farm Fantasy**

I'll let you touch me  
 inside the window seat,  
     if you use a match,  
 if you use your mouth.

I'll let you pull me down  
 inside the front closet,  
     if you use a rope,  
 if you use your eyes.

You could take me to that place  
     Inside the barnyard picture,  
 the one in the kitchen above the sink,  
     where the barbed wire fence  
     is dry and framed in dust.

I'd go almost willingly,  
 you could even make me drive.  
 The van windshield wipers  
     would cry for me,  
     hound-dog music,  
     and weird dirt road  
     the half mile driveway,  
 entering that barnyard picture together.

While there,  
 I'd find the match,  
 while your mouth tries to touch me.  
 I'd light the rope,  
 before your eyes pull me down,  
 I'd know all along my plan  
 about the fence that  
 needs you more than I.

Your sickening skin,  
 the barbed wire,  
 wet for each other.  
 I'd help you up the fence,  
 calmly moving the dust,  
 to make a better fit.  
 I'd leave you stuck there,  
 bleeding toward the sky  
 and drive out in the van.

Then sometimes while doing the dishes,  
 I'll watch you squirm  
 inside that picture,  
 knowing for sure,  
 that ours was not a hobby farm fantasy.

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 English department of St. Cloud State University*