

# GET A WAY

15 STORIES



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## ***Get A Way***

01 Bolivia	08 Bárbaro
02 Lee For Her	09 Grind Elegy
03 I Could Have Been Satisfied	10 Common Amenity
04 Ingenious Ancient Work	11 Marestail
05 Givings Jetty	12 Rigid, Fixed [1/2]
06 Portmanteau	13 Bones Club [2/2]
07 It Comes Down To My Having Second Thoughts About It	14 Trend
	15 Vermeil

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**Cover image:** Racquetball court, YMCA, Venice, FL, Jan 2016

See, I may have a childlike attitude, but a woman I once read about attempted a brand new direction with a straight face.

~ *Diane Williams*

## **Bolivia**

I add, This pullover I'm wearing my sister sent me from Bolivia. I add, She says when I wear it I look compact and pleasantly small. It's got a pattern of flowers and to keep it fluffed you've got to use the excruciating adverb.

I admit I am looking to get a reaction out of my neighbor, newspaper under his armpit, myself saying this across our fence. I want him to press into it, pleasantly.

When I bike to the grocer's it's all performance. He knows I've left the front door unlocked. Sometimes I expect to find him with his plump skein of skin and his wife run out, waiting for me there on my ottoman. But because my speech is out of style (though maybe for something sinister) he only greets me across the bushes, in the morning, from his lawn. The meaning is: this is how it works.

## Lee For Her

Most of the time I meet Mara by Boscov's, on the stoop. Today I do that, on the stoop. I've got a coiffed hairstyle and I wear a nice bra, for my own sake.

She'll likely say something about her shift. She works the one after mine.

A different woman, a coworker, gets Mara razed daily. She is Lily, fitful and obscene. There is a baby growing inside of her hard, white and shiny as a tooth. She has the tiredness or the hunger that makes her feel wild and plainspoken and inside the store is kept too cold.

I'm in there now, I am so impatient. There is Lily leaning her breasts over the jewelry counter. She, saying: "I'll tell you what, Mar, it's coming from this crevice if it comes at all. I prayed for a year and I don't know it'll fit!"

I feel some pain upon seeing this intimacy and again have the urge to give Mara a little life of her own, but of course there are the basic symmetries of our biology preventing that.

## **I Could Have Been Satisfied**

No, he didn't order it, and so I called a superior in spite of his own authority and asked to get it shipped away. This time it was a joint expenditure between himself and Bronwyn but I'm only looking for him, for Ready, who comes here to chew, who knows me.

Once I returned a wedding band to him in Sarasota, no, in Rome, New York. His eyes were the shape of mouths. He had pursed eyes. He was an ardent observer of society's ills. Have you seen his photo?

He did some research with the Broad Street Children's Center. He took it to Congress. Secrets had once kept him in thrall, but I didn't distrust him, anyway. He is an academic and he told me he told me the truth.

What might be condensed from this—a moral—a premonition—fairer judgment—I missed them, I think, when I declined to help him get the old wood play set put back up after the quake. The new set had come, I mentioned, but he hadn't ordered it. There were things like this always, coming and coming and turning back unclaimed.

And Ready took other lovers, as well—Holly—Jack, Kim—Michael—Michelle?—coming and turning away. And I used them as points of reference for improvement. And when I saw the shape that means sex has happened is when I returned the band.

Are you Ready? I could have been satisfied. Yes, I could be anyone. There are so many ways to settle for love it brings the god-awful back.



## Ingenious Ancient Work

One: A child's anger. That's what it felt like. The panel was a misuse of funds. There was only one guest speaker and she cussed—an inappropriate advance. She was escorted out.

The panel took the form of a forum, eventually. It moved online to a dot-org address. There were moderators who became disillusioned with the promise of community. Two: low-level arousal. A distraction from the rock anthropology. There was havoc in the building lobby. Carnal needs were revealed. The carbon-dating lecture series was canceled. It stopped sorting data. It stopped drawing funds.

A series of mistakes. What's as good is in any of them. Three: Anger. Anger. Anger. Put it away.



## **Givings Jetty**

A backward glance after the dispute, a rush of blood upon its reciprocation, a renewal of sentiment at the intersection, a blooming of violence across the road, a blunt demand for reprisal two blocks later, a sly departure on the stoop, a falling down up the second-floor stairwell, a refusal to acknowledge near the door, a drowning-out under the oven vent, a misguided aggression into the long-grain rice, a stooping down onto the tile floor, a plea for advice in the neighboring flat, a violent brushing before the mirror, a tentative reparation inside the stained bureau, an act of self-love atop the covers, a shy redial beneath them, a vague contrition through the pillow, a note of renewed defeat toward the ceiling.

## Portmanteau

The day it is later revealed I am frequently expecting, I see him crossing the street. I don't recognize him anymore with his rad cut which gives him a radish head.

He, Abner, is an axis of my two long moments. His nerves give him rote speech or a high compliance. He is snugly fit, warm, with a revolving countenance. He shouldn't be looked at head-on.

My hug with him, on his toes, on 2nd and Market, has the smell of salt meat, from the meat stall. And here's a tall feat: he invites me to see an act at the Trocadero.

He says, "Alone isn't how I'm going."

He says, "Against my better judgment, I want another." He wears the cherry staff polo and his sizing-me-up jacket and he, well, he is still an up-and-coming kind of boy and he abstains from some usual sociopolitics.

Get this: I miss it. It has been long enough that I cannot be prudent. (And I have already flushed my gut.)

It makes you sick to picture it, but we cab to the venue.

The act is called Long Chop. They're good to like when you're small. They play my favorite hits. I get my money's worth of movement.

You know what it's called when this moment of the story comes.

In the bathroom, Abner's parts are brought out for a time and I am scrubbing myself across his loins and he runs away after! Up and away!

And I am lying, I am lying and I say, "It's best just to get on with the softening of it, already."

## **It Comes Down to My Having Second Thoughts About It**

"I don't want him to be overborne," his mother keeps begging her phone, I mean, begging me. He goes to school to wrestle and meanwhile she leans on his friends. The school asks for exams and his span is so lean.

I am demanded once more in that off-focus way! I knew Ash, an honor, but only because he sought after me craftily. It was an under bleacher thing. It was a furtive ardor thing. There was the brief reconciliation before an abuse—the hunch, hunch, hunch and then sudden exhaustion—and he wanted me to manage it. I did. I tell her I'll go.

~

At Bloomsburg Ash airs himself out pleasantly. When he requests it I will bear it. (Repeat after me: I will give him the work and I will bear it.) The sky is a cloud threaded like a prim pants pocket button. The thing about these days is it's like some stupid renaissance and usually it comes down to my having second thoughts about it.

## **Bárbaro**

The last time it was managed to be eaten it had been cooked cleanly, with the right utensils, with the right seasonings, at the right time of day, with the right flourishes and the right way to set the oven before careful insertion.

The creature was fleshed and, cooking, crackling. Something about it aroused a genital feeling, originating in the palate.

It was a compromise or maybe a fine display of mediocrity.

In general, it was sliced in half or cubed or meant to be shredded but, rather, was torn freely or eaten whole or worried into a spongy bun.

## Grind Elegy

So, I make a ritual of the ends of my enterings and of my beings-entered.

So, I make an exit in front of this slow, quickening thing.

I make a left turn away from this unfamiliar suburb.

I am like a man whom opportunity resists, for after making the call and when the last ass smell lingered in my passenger upholstery, I sat—coldly—steaming behind the rush on route twenty-two.

You'd be hard-pressed to know it.

"You should get comfortable," said the man at my window. This was a still moment, still. I could tell this would be a lingering one.

I exited my car. I sat on my knees on the warm macadam for a stretch. I raised my hands toward the sky and counted to some odd number.

The next year, whenever I was stooping over or rolled onto my blades, or whenever I was being spread or pulled on or whenever I neared sexual climax I could close my eyes and envision how wrong it was to be devout in a temporary place.

## Common Amenity

Something happened to them that was bad. The bridge collapsed, or the new way of living was unsustainable and they all had to go home.

I wasn't one of them, though. We were just driving back to my mother's amid the migration. Throngs of people walking, dusty Phoenix landscape, lone rock guitar strum, et cetera. Slogging along mostly. I puffed a dust cloud out as I passed them, crowd by crowd, movie-style.

We were dog and me. I could hear my mother's voice. Whenever I was back in Phoenix I took a back seat. She would bark out her compliments to me. As she talked, she would jingle a low chain by her fine breasts and my drink would be sweating. It would be hot. The tone would be: a fight. She would say it was late, I had strayed.

I was reminded of my bedroom window. Nearby, through it, the childhood sweetheart was a pressure. I recalled prolonged fretting, a floating curtain.

I wasn't there yet, but I had to get out of the house. I had to take care of my dog. I parked along a suburban street corner and hitched her to my hip—with a carabiner.

We headed along the white walk toward town.

I thought of Marla, my mother, who was surely in her chair. I thought of her riding, sipping, and stitching. I thought of her making

arms out of it. I had called my mother and I had talked to her and I knew from the sound of it that there had been a transgression.

At the first corner cafe was the spot where I got this ceramic cup and at the next was where I had it filled. A low bowl of water quenched the dog.

My mother came back. I think about her still, scooping me up, using a licked thumb to wipe whatever off. Once, she stopped. There was codependence. There was seepage. My heartache will not stand on recall.

At the core of the city was a square. A local monument was sheathed within a candle, for the holidays. This was December. My dog was panting now. I scooped her up and walked us to a bench. A mother is a common amenity. I was thinking about that.

To beat around the bush, I put it plainly. I prefer to communicate with gestures. I accepted the terms of my own proposal.

My dog and me, our leg veins were white and taut like wart fibers and easily sliced and plucked. The severing of the limbs was iconoclastic.

Regarding my mother, I had been trying to do exactly what she was doing but I ended up failing and doing something else.



## Marestail

Get them cooling and get them going. On a Tuesday it's chopping up the greens gets them going. Cooling going far gets them these Tuesdays. Serve them on a porch where it's hot here even in the winter. Sorry to say Lara has no time to be served. She's got to get going. The greens come anyway. But—what's that?—she makes a little fuss.

Mr. Rotten came with the salad and Lara waved: "I can't eat this." There was that breeze cooling through the marestail near the copper railing. There was that plasticized cloth flapping near her legs, near the table. "I have an appointment." And she pointed, achingly, to her teeth.

"But it's made," Mr. Rotten said. There was the cooling and the chopping already, gotten going and done, the fresh tomato bulbs thrown in, too. Not to mention... "We make it for you every day!" Not to mention the right-tonged fork chosen appropriately from the small tool slats in back.

"I won't have it. I need to show off my teeth," is the reason Lara gave.

She took a thin pick to her teeth and scraped to prove it.

Mr. Rotten raised the dish. It was cooling. "You'll have to pay and you'll have to eat it, too," he said.

But she stood and got going.

He escorted the salad back to a bad food bin. The suggestion was insulting. Anyway, he had been to a chiropractor once or twice and recently he regained some of his harder gumption.

## **Rigid, Fixed**

Just like that, upon passing, she expects to have the contents of her life laid out for her and evidently they are. She flushes. She jerks at her eyes, kneads at the place where her life would be.

It seems less a question of time to her than of permission. On deck, her lime suit straps dig into her shoulders. She has an appetite for this kind of painful stimulation.

She blanches at the overall of the event. The water's lapping is a forceful yielding. She has been trained to adjust the painted foot plate shredding at her heels, and, another thing, a burgeoning dump is ignored by her on the floor of her belly.

A way to be is a sudden rotation until impact. This is the first of a series.

She wasn't as good at this kind of thing when she was still a girl, still a, uh, a person who used language to excuse enigmatic behavior.

What doesn't happen when she finishes is a handshake or the appearance of a meaningful trifle. What does is the blurring of several textures on the wall and the contraction of a small crevice of nerve.

Until a synthetic flap of skin is removed to expose a more promising organ, she will consider herself well-endowed.

## Bones Club

In the event of sudden evacuation, it's best to remain purely motivated and purely hydrated and to duck out unseen. Like, it's best to duck the fuck out with due speed.

Maybe not. It's better to go slow, i.e. without tripping.

Too much erotic yanking will shorten your shelf life.

There's no avoiding your half-baked, precise, laughable fortuitous fate.

The second text of a renowned experimentalist is lost on me.

That's alright.

When I was thirteen, I secretly saw a leaping-out man in the flesh and he leapt out and affected me and now I'm this way.

That's churchy.

I don't intend to evoke the shifting shape of a horrid memory.

That's manipulation. I want to be lush, guileless.

I am trying to say myself. I like a good heart.

## Trend

With my inside wife I had been ferried here as if dead. I can only bring two bags to the airport. I want you to remember the first thing you knew about me. This is another happy story now.

On the plane a small boy spilled wine into my lap—a wide red stain.

It's OK! I'll be gone of all small marks in a new land.

But underneath: the horizon? I've waited to emerge from this cold and long thing, and finally it's time. Inside: vending machine. French girl. Free latrine. Old friends. They try to be seen pragmatically.

Again, on a bus to somewhere new. Here's that French girl. She's a proponent of a Labovian indulgence. She's maybe just lazy. She was approached by me, trying not to be an envoy. She sat on her tanned gladstone; was fixing a kink in her sock; said, "I can feel my home following me;" seemed to be chewing on her lip.

And here's that boy! It's OK. But I scolded him.

He said, "Black ruins of my life rise into view."

That gives it away.

For one unsheathing a cutlery set, it's fine to rip the little napkin tab in the process. They put forks on the left here, too. I dropped the knife onto a boot. There was, wasn't there?, the promise of something to be opened. Wasn't there just a fine film covering the window? OK.

It cost so much. I can't cut it for its stiffness. I am fumbling with the shears. I dropped them. I like to be quiet. I am turning. I can feel myself changing. I am getting a way.

## Vermeil

Numbers have a relation to one less than what makes them whole when a decimal is involved. I'm saying: be thankful for ugly blessings. Although I don't like you, somebody will.

Carrying my ermine—that is, my carmine—tote bag is a chore I'm happy to endure. At the crossroads I met with Brandon and we had a brief exchange. He took that red bag from me and walked down town to the St. David's station.

To be frank, he stole it. I never got it back and that's one of many things I'll have learned from him.

The bag was ancient and ugly and I had affixed rollers to it so it could be tugged along. Inside were my crime reports and some food, so I was out on them, too.

Inside was a secret about one or all of them that could lead to mine or the bad guy's demise. I am not a crime solver, but I like to try get to know them like that. I want do a lot of good.

...If I ask you, will you be honest? I feel like I'm counterfeit. I hope I'm not too overt about it. To be frank, I don't like you but I know you've done well for yourself. Any new input will get me closer to the good me. I want to be any way. No matter. You know. "I" is someone else.