

SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN



M E L I S S A S T E I N

It's all the rage to sport waxed moustaches
and cure your own sausages
in some mildewy basement that formerly
would have hosted convulsively
awkward parties with spin the bottle and seven
minutes in the dark and terrifying closet
(a.k.a. heaven) but now boasts sopressata
strung on repurposed vintage drying racks
and fat clay pots of kombucha and curdling hops.
Personally I've never recovered from the sex-shaped
void left in those closets by all the groping
that should have occurred to me but didn't:
right under my nose kids my age were creeping
into adulthood one clammy, trembling palm
on one breast at a time. There was also
the horror of not being chosen in gym.
It is conceivable that learning intricately
how to butcher an entire hog
and render every morsel might give one
a feeling of mastery one lacked in childhood.
It is the greatest immaturity to believe suffering
entitles you to something someone wiser
and quite possibly grayer than I once said.
But in those basements and carpoools and
playgrounds as I assassinated one by one
clandestinely my torturers
abandoning their foul normal
bodies to compost the astonishing
tedium of the wending suburban lanes,

I was transubstantiating to supernal
fame and beauty and such eerie genius
that entire books were written about my
books. In fact it takes a long time to realize
your suffering is of very little consequence
to anyone but you. And by that time the future
is already happening and you're pickling okra
and star fruit and foraging for morels in urban forests
and suspending artisan mozzarella in little wet nets
and crafting small-batch, nitrite-free data
and maybe even thinking about having
children, which you swore in a million
billion years you would never do.