

CHEYENNE TAYLOR

## The Year of Boiled Eggs and Dr. Pepper

The days unfolded half by accident:  
your whiskers grew in catalytic bursts,  
the sun left hateful notes, the sink gave out  
pontifical advice with every drip;  
but even in the dust-and-drain-fly hours,  
    you said you loved me for my mind.

You'd stare into the woods beyond the chain-  
link fence where black snakes scrawled out names in mud,  
the bees all hummed like drunks, and tickseed blazed.  
You showed me how to use the Ruger time  
and time again; but boredom was our only  
    threat then, the ways we emptied out

our breath. You cracked a little egg inside  
my chest with every bid, and I'd pretend  
the walls were cellophane, collapsible,  
erected for containment. Still I wish  
I'd known how much I'd miss it: moldering  
    with you, balancing the checkbook.

# The Importance of Small Suffering

*for the Radium Girls*

What counts, these days, as suffering? To live  
is to consume, to circumscribe an itch  
inside the quiet chamber of your skin.

You wonder—dipping your brush into paint tins,  
lipping the lucent camel hairs to tips—  
what counts, these days, as suffering. To live

between the ticking hands, you opt to give  
your marrow to the airmen, mulch to kitsch.  
Inside the quiet chamber of your skin,

your jaw clocks out, moth-eaten, guilloche-thin.  
In five, six weeks, you would have gotten hitched.  
Who counts these days? Past suffering is lived

in radiance: fur collars, pitted olives.  
You can't complain about the dial of thistles  
inside the quiet chamber of a skin

that blisters where your children would have been.  
Your bezel twirls. Your glowing bones turn rich.  
What counts, these days, as suffering? To live  
inside the quiet chamber of your skin.