

TRACI BRIMHALL

On the Feast Day of Our Lady Hippolyta

We want customers to bring us arrows fletched
with macaw feathers and whisper the password—

sterile—three times before we let them in. We want
men with narrow hips and a good memory for myth

to keep us up all night reading Ovid's *Amores*
or recite Sappho as they groom their mustaches

in the mirror above the bed. We want to bite,
to climb, to zipper our way back into the story where

the Amazon queen appeared in her girdle before
three children and foretold the lumberjack apocalypse.

We want the men who bus in from sapphire mines
and rubber plantations to spend a week's pay

on ten minutes with a one-breasted woman who'll let
them call her Hippolyta, the sound of their bodies

like a fresh catch slapping the dock, wet and desperate
and piscine, like damp laundry flapping on the line,

like a mule at its branding, like a novitiate visited
by the Holy Spirit in the middle of her vespers.

If we want sonnets to praise the downy hairs
on our upper lips, who cares? If we want to learn about

the French Revolution as we eat cake, so what?
Only in this building on this day in this town does

anyone commemorate the children returning home,
their knees already scabbing with bark, to warn

of bulldozers and chainsaws and the perils of flying
kites next to power lines. We celebrate the miracle

one customer at a time, nocking our arrows
and aiming for the sun's white eye. We want

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to write in our diaries—*Dear, there are some things
I would not do for pleasure.* We want it to be true.