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All Mistakes Were Once New

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All Mistakes Were Once New

Abstract

There is always someone who has done
unspeakable things to a child, an animal,
a room or tent or cave or car of them.

To be insatiable isn't to be
unbreakable. You can mistake
damage for passion, the heel of a hand
slammed into a wheel for pride, a glass
ashtray heaved at an iron radiator
for pluck or verve...

Cover Page Footnote

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All Mistakes Were Once New

by Leslie Adrienne Miller

There is always someone who has done
unspeakable things to a child, an animal,
a room or tent or cave or car of them.

To be insatiable isn't to be
unbreakable. You can mistake
damage for passion, the heel of a hand
slammed into a wheel for pride, a glass
ashtray heaved at an iron radiator
for pluck or verve. Rage
that just keeps coming
might look like a fear
you're keen to quell,
like a body open only to you,
its expanse of yeasts and oils
entering the mind like a field,
furrow and tussock, a teaming
wreck of dry clods furred
with curled grasses and open above
to anything that can fly.

If you live long enough, you think
you can escape that dazzling expanse,

maybe outrun shame while you're at it,
arrive somewhere quiet and wild
with a companion who wants
nothing of you but to share the fire.
But watch someone you love pass
from this life, and you'll see
the flaw: shame takes us
all the way to the door,
and those who love us most
are a misery of maneuvering,
even as they mop our brows
and bury their noses in our hair.
They want us happy the only way
they know, which is to say
they carry us by clump and crumble
into futures we can't share,
and make of us the vistas
they hoped for all along.

Leslie Adrienne Miller's collections of poetry include *Y*, *The Resurrection Trade*, and *Eat Quite Everything You See* from Graywolf Press, as well as *Yesterday Had a Man In It*, *Ungodliness*, and *Staying Up For Love* from CMU Press. Professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, she holds degrees in writing and literature from the Iowa Writers Workshop and the University of Houston. Her website is <http://lesliemillerpoet.com/>.