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THE
DAUGHTER
OF
MAN

L.J. Sysko

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Self-Portrait as Molly Pitcher

I wore a Diana Virgin Goddess mask despite my contrary status, pouring pitcher after pitcher for Revolutionary soldiers. O, how I wanted to scabble over their terrain—rough and uneven—alongside the wagon train, doubling back and over, scouting for the best brook from which to collect, trekking upstream of their latrine, and, with each tipple and ladle into a patriot mouth smoked and pursed, I lost a little of my name. *Over here* morphed from a whistle into *Pitcher* then someone added *Molly*, and I guess I could've put the bucket down, subordinated myself a little less like a spaniel than a swatch of fodder for the cannon, but at the time, they seemed basically the same. *Betsy Ross, you know her?* As though hookers working the same corner are necessarily friends? I never met her until they locked us both up in an inset box. There in the basement of a history textbook page, we didn't even speak. My role was only pathetic volunteer, keeping parched heroes hydrated, but Betsy, she stitched and sewed their symbols together. After that, all we saw were stars.

M.I.L.F.

The M's self-explanatory.

The I

is a boy-man's first-person perspective—
 a set of eyes evaluating
 her body's sensual potential
 relative to his anticipated pleasure:
 a furtive cost-benefit analysis
 taking into account hidden value against
 asset depreciation.

L stands for like, but it's the K in like
 that I like for its indecorous clack
 of tongue against soft palate
 followed by a tiny capitulating exhale—
 breath that subordinates itself
 to the future's pulsing throb,

a throb I can feel from here
 as I stand at the gas pump
 near a boy-man topping off
 his already-full tank
 with aggressive lever-pumps.
 He's like a nearly satiated baby
 nodding off to sleep
 but awakening with a start
 once the nipple pops free of his lips.
 He's got a clamping latch
 and loud, complaining colic.

That cry's going to shatter your nerves,
 the nurse said to me postpartum,
 and my firstborn—my daughter—did,

but I got my nerves back.
Or, we grew them anew
together.

My favorite nerve's still the one
connecting my nipple to
my contracting womb.
I'd never have known
how animal and wild I am
but for that burning flare,
casting light enough
by which to survey the ground
of my body's farthest biomes.

Boy-man at the gas station
doesn't know nipples, or nerves, or
wombs from Adam, but
judging from his handling of this moment,
he knows what the F signifies.

His thoughts' transit
from M to F
seems quick,
prematurely coming
without verification
of my M status
or the length, depth, or
breadth of his own L.

What I think
he knows best is

I.
He's an I expert,
giving tours of local,
erect monuments to: being.

And his being wants me to know
he sees me: being.
 I to I.
And for that, I thank him.
His is an affirmation
 of a kind, here at Pump #3.
Even as his gaze travels
across my body, he's tearing the receipt
 hard and fast away from the pump,
crumpling it in a clenched fist as
his eyes move like the jet stream that
 rakes then dips
across America's
breadbasket, dropping heat
 and moisture down and down,
before rising up and
peeling out
 to sea.
In a Ford F-150.

Pleasure in the Age of Overwhelm

My right hand is charged with redemption of the Now.
 It will ache later. Lightning flashes
 on loamy banks beside my clitoris. What else is there
 this Afternoon when I'm meant to read write
 attend the tragic pageant of the news? Generations have
 abdicated. In the Age of Overwhelm may as well be honest.
 In our separate provinces humans pretend to work
 from home but we're all scrolling doom
 then palpating the ache massaging our plight a little
 then rhythmically keeping time
 on muffled timpani beneath fleece throws.

Such a rite our thunder:
 Nature is never finished.
 For each wrath-wrought bolt wreaking down
 our benevolence can still tender rain across
 the fruited plain plump clouds in
 spacious skies swell waves of amber grain.
 Come! I beg you listen to the hush just after
 crisis. All is soaked and sated bright with
 shameful excess. How do we explain? I've
 turned cartoon
 and you: caricature.

*I'm just reading.
 I'm watching a show. I'm
 finishing a document.
 I'm gonna loll and lie
 here a while. Are you headed out?*

Once the car backs down the driveway we beat
 hasty retreat to the couch and love
 ourselves for old times' honor.
 A lesser God groans
 just relieved
 to feel at all alone.