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# Hydrolysis

*Coal Mine Mesa, Navajo Nation*

*Bojan Louis*

I.

To hunt work down, her dad slurred  
as consistently as the days  
his unemployment was condoned.

No mail delivery or landlines she hitched,  
anytime the neighbor's wagon passed.  
Funny. In the 50s, most the country drove.

Had buses stopping at the long end of dirt  
ruts. Wouldn't have mattered.  
Liver failure, dysentery would keep him home.

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Before ever playing with books and paper  
my mother swung axes.  
Kindling, priority over that of her heart.

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BOJAN LOUIS is a member of the Navajo Nation: Naakai Dine'é; Ashiihí; Ta'neezahnii; Bilgáana. He is a poet, fiction writer, essayist, and poetry and production Editor for RED INK: An International Journal of Indigenous Literature, Arts, & Humanities. His first collection of poetry, *Currents*, is forthcoming from BkMk Press in Fall 2017.

The hope for supper and frosted-dune  
dawns indebted the family  
to wood. Her siblings and her stole

what made stars burn from gas cans  
at the trading post  
and huffed that shit into their lungs.

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It's neat to scissor perforated outlines,  
so that the cut keeps—  
feathered edges thirst for moisture,

dissolve, and warble like voices  
nixing sleep.  
Somnambulant sons and daughters

cleaved from the everyday bonding  
of their parents.  
If it's not them who alter, it's *you*.

## II.

It's *knock-up* when solar hues dampen  
the trek home's frost  
after a desperate and smitten beau,

whose bed is already shared by a sibling,  
swears palm to chest  
that his groin is sated, no longer a trope

of want or population. But a tropic  
above the equator, where  
one heat is necessary, one heat is good.

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Handouts buy diapers hardly, ever. Do food,  
sometimes. A belly,  
stretch-marked and loose, after a body's exit

is again a plasterer's hawk, a temporary  
hold before a more permanent  
smearing. Lead paint bleeding into asbestos,

crumbling to flake and dust. An interlock  
of detritus, dead weeds  
blown against volcanic rock. Birth to birth, all this.

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Off the uranium wind reservation, on Utah farms  
and in cities, god comes easy;  
a touching that's domestic, the fault of being

language naughty or sun-darkened pretty;  
simple as thighs  
like chicken skin, pussy wet like dog nose.

A truth that is contraband distributed  
on the home front, where  
the more one loses one's self, the less is asked of them.

III.

It's better if monsters are vanquished with *our* stories.  
Done in by Hero Twins:  
Naayé'neizgháni dóó Tóbá'jishchíni. Mom's words

—labyrinths aren't nature's making, humans  
obsessed over harnessing  
a pattern; placing dead ends, calling walls art.

Whether trimmed hedge or bonded by mortar  
both, anything really, began  
in water. And it keeps us, and it keeps us.

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Despite my traditional knowing, there's no other  
*being* I'll see in the poorly  
stained cedar cabinet willed to me. A Greek

he-monster. Myth trim and fit with afflictions  
of earth. Moss beard, stump horns,  
hoof foot, and lichen plaque. Not an ideal.

More a reject that science or the pope will heal.  
It's not a matter of what I see.  
After a burial, the unstained cedar can be burned.

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Time, in any circumstance, disfigures. Basically,  
don't be bothered by what  
you can't know. Keep at that bucolic dream.

The one where money is no problem but  
something else is, like  
sky without bird, gust with no pollen, or

season with one temperature.  
A place where wind never quits,  
just blows some other way.