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Blood

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Erratum

This piece has been revised. The text of this piece in the initial publication was incorrectly formatted; this error is corrected in this version.

Jenny Irish

responding to

“All the Trees Are Dead Inside” by Danika Stegeman Lemay

Blood

I live now among a kind of people who are made uncomfortable by the idea of two children, for most of their shared lives, sleeping breath-to-breath in the narrow alley of a single bed. I can see the evidence of the workings of their brains in the shifting of their blood. A blush—is what I mean. Perhaps they are recalling the work of Egon Schiele which has been described equally, across history, as erotic and grotesque. They are a kind of people who know the names of many artists, working in many disciplines, and have at the ready, many handy loaded anecdotes. I have learned so much from each of them, though never how to place a lethal pause in a conversation, killing it as cleanly as a decapitation would, by which I do mean dead, but with lots and lots of blood. So perhaps they are recalling the work of Egon Schiele, who was mentored by Gustav Klimt. Egon Schiele who was so prolific in his production of discolored, contorted women, his cheap studio the gathering place of street-kids. I recognize the power of the vague detail to create a taste at the back of the throat—that same bitterness as a pill swallowed dry. I understand the appearance of a bed creates its own electricity. Intentions do not matter, though my intention was never to produce discomfort. Made weak by loneliness, there are moments when I expose myself, a fool, hoping to be better understood. We were not sisters, if that helps. I never thought of it—our relationship—never questioned what caused us to be tethered, one to the other. As the younger of our two, I only ever knew us bound. I feel that I should not have to say, *Nothing like that*. But, nothing like that. What I mean is the intimacy that exists between children who have stopped the bleeding of one another’s cuts with the pressure of their tongues.