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#### OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

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Her mouth  
crammed full of  
dentists' hands,  
body  
bruised  
by  
doctors'  
fleshy fingers,  
mind  
dizzy  
from the probing  
pencils of  
psychiatrists,  
and shoulders aching  
from the weight  
of pockets  
heavy  
with time cards,

and tax forms,  
receipts,  
class schedules,  
typed memorandum,  
and her past  
like a pail  
of vomit,  
spread thin,  
pecked in files,  
perused by probation  
officers and judged  
by judges running  
sterile appendages of  
authority over the  
facts that labeled  
her life,  
and became  
her.

It came as no surprise  
that the hands now upon her breasts  
would linger,  
sliding to encompass her form,  
and hesitate,  
cruelly,  
before trickling down her thighs.

It came as no surprise,  
and she  
bit her tongue,  
and felt her fingers clutch  
as best they could  
cold metal—  
the patrol car roof.

"Spread your legs," he said.

They all said that,  
but this one had the right  
credentials  
and the gun,  
so she obeyed.

and felt fingers  
groping for  
the weapon that she did  
not  
have concealed within  
her crotch.

She felt in his palms  
the eyes of lawyers  
and lovers,  
prying,  
and the fingers . . .

She thought of the long  
intricate canals drilled  
and scraped, the hollow roots  
of teeth before the filling,  
and longed,  
as she had as a child  
longed,  
to crawl within the  
caverns  
of decay.

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by Cynthia Tyman

PRISON VISITING-BOOTH

My  
hand  
on  
chilling  
walls  
ground  
from the  
grunting  
souls  
of  
union (no doubt)  
labors  
on  
cement  
forms  
sparsely  
covered  
with a  
thin pretense  
of  
wood  
  
your voice  
over wire  
twisted by  
one  
who  
doesn't own stock  
in the company  
and voted yes on the  
death penalty  
and can't afford to  
cease the strain of  
years that twist his mind  
like wire

your face  
through glass  
poured with the pain  
of men to whom  
a poem is  
no  
thing

your body  
wrapped  
in  
khaki cloth  
stitched  
by factory fingers  
tight and  
tolling in dim  
light  
(no doubt)

What love  
to lubricate  
the labor?  
to give breath to  
the dead hours  
spent  
constructing this concrete cubicle  
in which we crouch  
divided  
by  
so much more than  
glass?

no love, no breath  
I gasp  
the space  
itself  
reeks gaseous  
of dead  
mind and dreams

I would have the glass as sand  
the penelling as tree  
the concrete walls as gravel  
supporting a moving sea

I'd dissolve the telephone  
the heat that fused, a sun  
the time spent forging all these things  
for you and I as one

we two  
cast into our separate pain  
are merely  
poured liquid glass  
cooled to impenetrable crystal  
and polished to high lustre  
we can no longer see each other  
our surfaces reflect

our fragile love a thin veneer  
beneath which  
I grow numb  
numb as the arthritic hands of the seamstress  
as the concrete face of the worker

my breath comes hard  
and shallow  
and too cold  
to  
melt the glass to  
sand

I leave you  
black receiver  
cradled still within  
your sweating hand.