

The Report

Elizabeth Crowell

I picked *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*
for my sixth grade book report.
Mr. Williams, brought down from the high school
to teach us, because no one else would,
smoke-breathed and bored, said *marvelous*,
she's really something,
but my mother thought it wasn't appropriate
for a girl my age, though the picture on the cover
was of a sad girl who looked my age
in a wallpapered room.
I said everyone was lonely
as if to give the book some more importance,
and she looked at me
like the time I pointed out my uncle
was drunk when he left our house.
She said there was a difference between
being lonely and being a lonely hunter
and I said it made sense a lonely person
would hunt and she said, *oh my God*.

I looked in the eyes of girls
happy with their nurses books or Nancy Drews,
and I tried to talk to Mr. Williams,
though every day, at the sound of the last bell,
he bucked from the class,
lights out, and fled to the parking lot
as if he were on the trail of something.
I came out of the bright library
where I had dropped the book in the book drop
as if I were throwing away spoiled bait
with the tenth book

I'd read about orphans who solved mysteries.
I went home and baked Mr. Williams' brownies
because I thought I could disappoint him

and later I didn't know why I felt
as if he should be ashamed
when he told me how delicious they were,
how he'd eaten them one after another,
he couldn't stop, even after he was full.

The Boy with a Box of Arrows

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next to Roach's Sporting Goods, this side of fourteen,
shiny-nosed, could be Cupid with good ideas.
There's a red heart in him, beating everywhere,
flushing his cheeks, breaking him out;
he could be champion,
that loose-laced sneaker might point,
bow, strung sweet as a lyre,
pressed to his clear eyes,
and all of him aimed
at the white of the bull's-eye
pillows on some safe green range.

We have come to fear the boys
with their sad frowns, with the great hum
of their skateboards moving them along,
with their doe-eyed looks as they
listen to music is cushioned to their ears.
We think it's death they listen to;
We don't see them alone, like this,
entrusting themselves with something
they have paid for by
standing behind a cash register or boiling fat.

Look how he has his hands around these arrows,
how he cradles them like a child,
barely knowing he is still a child,
how he frowns, at the same time,
as if he would kill who takes them,
as if he knows what love is,
if he can just get it home.

Elizabeth Crowell was born and raised in NJ. She holds an MFA in poetry from Columbia University and has taught high school English. Her work has most recently appeared in *The Worcester Review*, *The Sheepshead Review*, and *The Healing Muse*. She lives outside Boston with her wife and two children.