

Until the Last Light Leaves

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IN THE BUILDING

The group home is getting dressed for Halloween and Harry's picked the shiny white Elvis jump suit. It's way too tight. Two counselors struggle to pull the top over his shoulders, finally fit his arms into sleeves. His stomach sticks out like he's ten months pregnant and the workers try not to laugh. Harry wants to know whether he can eat five slices of pizza at the party as he struts toward the mirror, announces that he looks like a fucking dickhead. I nod, tell him he sure does, ask if he prefers the Humpty Dumpty costume. He pauses, curls his top lip like the King, strums an imaginary guitar and sings I Can't Help Falling In Love as the workers slow dance across the floor.

FAITH

You find it hard to believe
in any kind of God: Priests,
little boys, countless kept secrets;
Israelis, Palestinians, that dirty war
over somebody's idea of holy land;

Your girlfriend's autistic son,
and how she stopped loving you
suddenly; the sharp, numbing
loneliness. Yet, every morning

You reach across the mattress
quiet that bleating alarm,
sit up, still half asleep,
ready to do whatever
the hell it is you now do.

BIRTHDAYS

Jesse and Gillian, the daughter of my long
distance friend, both turned
eighteen in June. She's decided to study history,
political science at Harvard.
Her mom already misses her. Jesse graduated from his special
program. I watched the video
my ex girlfriend emailed a few times every morning
this week: Scenes of yoga poses,
his art exhibit at a local gallery, counselors, teachers
and students wishing him all the luck
in the world, saying how much they'll miss him as he sat
on a low slung hammock and a Cat
Stevens song played. He's spending the weekend at a Water
Park and he'll start regular high school
this Fall with two workers shadowing him down
hallways, through classrooms.

At eighteen, I was lost and living in my parents' basement,
fighting with my father, wondering
how many years I could kill in college before I was forced
to find a job I'd hate for the rest
of my life. I was happiest running full court and pitching
stickball at the schoolyard, listening
to Dylan, writing in spiral notebooks, trying to find the perfect
words to say to Julia Jordan, a place
in the world to belong. Like Jesse, like Gillian, like you. Day after
every damn lonely, blessed day.