

Three Poems by Christine Hamm

Smoke Damage

The stairway up.
Ash settling in
the rubber treads,
strands of cat hair
floating into an
egg-shaped ball.
The curved banister
so loose it shifts
as you pass, making
a small "oof". An orange
streak faded into
the red wall From
the skylight. The
stickers a child hid
under the railing: half
a doll's face with
blue hair, a leftover
green hand. The
door at the top,
the glass knob dusty
and difficult to turn.

Ignition Source

Your old ponytail tied in the dresser drawer.
Sandlewood oil spilt on the gray wall-to-wall.
Traces of silver crayon. Old wall paper torn in the
shape of a hound's face: the pattern a pink woman

dancing, holding up her hem. Wax scraped from the blender's dial. Dog tags clinking on the light-bulb's chain, your hand-lotion smeared in circles on the mirror frame. A woodpecker nest in the china cabinet. A fingernail scratch on the bannister where you slipped. Broken-edged tea cups under the foam in the sink. A near dry violet wash-cloth dangling over the chair arm. Lace curtains cut to rags on the back porch: a half-drunk bottle, made of dark blue glass, on the steps going down.

Smoking Lessons

A) *Snow in March.*

The deer in our backyard, drowsy and paper-thin, slept through, so flakes clung to their spines and eyelashes.

Stumbling through the fallen forest
beneath our house,
small animals left traces like ink on vellum.

And your mother, driving us home that night,
skidded on ice
into the mailbox, and we laughed as she sat and
held her breath.

And your hand, the day after, had a lump like a
stone growing
inside your palm. And you whispered,
blood poisoning,
as you hid my necklace in your back pocket.

B) *Smoke in July.*

Leaning over the deck's railings, we searched
for the moon
through the sweet haze of the neighbor's forest fire.

The moon never appeared, though we
looked it up twice
in the encyclopedia. And you sang to me
what you knew
about eclipses, as we picked through
the frozen watermelon in the sink.

And your hand was still bandaged and too soft.
And I put out my mother's cigarette
on your bare knee,
to see what it felt like.

Christine Hamm has been published in *The Adirondack Review*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Horseless Press*, *Lodestar Quarterly*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Poetry Midwest*, *MiPoesias*, *Rattle*, *Snow Monkey* and *Exquisite Corpse*, among others. She has been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize, and once for "The Best of the Web". Her work has been anthologized in *Homewrecker: An Adultery Reader* and *The Murdering of Our Years: Artists and Activists on Making Ends Meet*. Her books of poems are *The Transparent Dinner* and *Saints & Cannibals*.