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KITTEN SURVIVES WOOD CHIPPER/SEVERED PIG'S
HEAD THROWN INTO MOSQUE

Matt Mullins

Two headlines, signs of our divided mind
sharing today's front page. In one we are

the nurturers, witnesses to the miracle,
in the other, bigots speaking through

the frozen thuds of a rolling pig head
bowled past the prostrate as they send

their prayers toward Mecca. *I thought
it would be funny*, the man from Maine

told the cops. *It was meant to be a joke.*
And some surely do find such a joke

funny—an assumption of humors
turned on end, only to turn on us again

as we assume throwers of pig heads
do their throwing from a deep south

and kittens happen into wood chippers
in a far north, not the other way around

as our headline stories claim. Understand.
This is how our truths lie, between

the lines, in blank spaces telling the eternal
tale of humanity's compassions and hatreds

colliding in a wreck that cancels us out
causes you and me to consider this

world from behind the fluttering eyelids
of the faithful just now disturbed at prayer,

through the tree-cutter's saw-dusted safety
goggles as he reaches for the switch.

On the side of that grinding mouth
the curious, wandering animal sought

likely for the sake of shelter or a dark
womb-place to take a nap, I imagine

there must have been a symbol or at least
a name. Some owner or maker's claim

to deconstructions that should include
those gravities attached to the dull thumps

of a frozen, severed pig head signaling
the arrival of the mangled thing that is

our current psychological condition spit out
torn, yet living still, a mewling fur-ball

rushed to the pet hospital where even
animals must endure our need for doing

everything possible to stave off those
afterlives we kill to prove. Such headlines!

To accept them is to claim the only truths
left to us are the primetime clichés born

of our suffering those countless channels
beaming the nonsense of this America

down upon our dissolving neighborhoods.
No! We are more than bombers of cities

whose cities have never truly been bombed.
Invaders never invaded but for the lolling

consciences awash in the blue glow
of three hundred million TV evenings.

We are one hand triggering the other
to proffer a package labeled CARE,

terrified bigots tossing pig heads into holy
places and tree cutters tenderly cradling

a bloody lump picked from the gnawed dust.
Believe otherwise and there is no arguing

against a history of bodies heaped in accusation,
the flies caking the wronged dead staring

through us across centuries of convenient lies.
Eight surgeries later, the kitten's prognosis

calls for full recovery. *You always have to
be optimistic and give it your best shot.*

Never count anybody or anything out.
The veterinarian binds our internal wound,

solves us so neatly with a soundbite of trite
aphorisms we'll accept even as we

ignore them with a love of our hatreds
and a hatred for the failure of our hopes.

By tomorrow we'll have forgotten the shaken
kneeling with their vacuums, not questioning

their commandment to cleanse the reasons
why. Is the answer to this question stitched

to another question, the same one
we always fail to ask: when

the wound becomes the body
what does the mind become

once the wound heals over?