Roma

By Matthew Dickman

Last night my neighbor was looking a little enlightened,

you know, the way bodies do

after spending the afternoon having sex

on an old couch while responsible people are suffering

with their clothes on in cubicles and libraries.

He had that look vegetables get

in really nice grocery stores where the tomatoes aren't just red

they're goddamn red!

He was like that. Like a glowing, off-the-vine Roma

sitting in his living room picking pineapple off a Hawaiian pizza

and telling me about his father who was a real mother

fucker. I ask him if he still loved his dad, or if he loved him more

now that he is dead. *Sure,* he says, *I love anything that's dead.*

Someone's hand floats up onto the beach

while the body is still lost below the current, a vase of lilacs

turned brown, the black archipelago of mourners marching

up the hill. My neighbor is there to greet each of them

with a box of chocolates and a barbershop quartet in the background.

*When my father died,* he says opening a beer, *he was no longer*

*my father. He was no longer a man. It's easy to love things*

*when they're powerless, like children and goldfish.*

This is the way with enlightened people. They say things

that are so infuriatingly simple when the world is not.

So I put down my Pepsi and pull out the big card.

*What about Hitler?* I ask. *You can't love Hitler!*

My neighbor puts a piece of pineapple on his tongue like a sacrament,

sucks the juice out of it, chews it up, then turns

his head slow like a cloud and says *I can love anybody I feel like loving.*

And I say *that's ridiculous.*

And he says *what's ridiculous is that you don't.* And there he is again,

shining in the grocery store, pulling the bow off

the heart-shaped candies and putting one softly into his father's mouth.