

In Choice Becomes Insensibility

Mathias Svalina

You must choose between whimsy & dropsy:
between the loss of your cheekbone or chin.

You either can use the butt of a shotgun
or we will drive into downtown Scranton.

We will twine thin metal around new elms
or we will taunt two schoolgirls jumping

rope on newly-laid cement sidewalks
as the drugstores burn like candyapples.

What will it be today? A malted milk
or another dose of pyridium? Remember

the climax is the most exhausting part
of the novel. Remember the event itself

is not yet a metaphor & remember where we
parked the Jaguar. Some days the rustle

of dried autumn leaves along deserted streets
(while somewhere chimney smoke & somewhere

the smell of burnt sugar) can be nothing more
than the sound of a plastic slinky

passed from one hand to the other & soon
the doctor will emerge from his office

with his bent glasses clinging to his nostrils
like Cary Grant to Mt. Rushmore or like

a virus embedded in a red blood cell
& I will regret the other knowledge of choice.