

Incorrect Distances



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From The Boston Review Philpot's astonishing debut takes its name from a Lacanian reference to incest: "an incorrect distance from loved ones." A domestic violence counsellor in Seldovia, Alaska, Philpot is well-acquainted with narratives of pathological relationships--incestuous, violent, emotionally abusive. "She's named her bruises / Jellyfish and Rorschach," she writes in "How the Crazy Love." In "Wildlife," the speaker tells a lover, "I want to be the best scar on your body." Philpot expresses, as in "The Holiday of Escape," what it means to be irrevocably hardened by betrayal: "Even if I've loved you this way once / it will never happen again." In "A Victim in a Beautiful House," the horrors of an existence rampant with abuse and upheaval are catalogued matter-of-factly: "a personal life written on shift notes / a roof that prevents beauty / a secluded voice of dystonic verbs / --and now they say even the scraps of dreams / will kill you in your sleep." Here, as in so many of her poems, Philpot arrives at a heartbreaking discovery, noting that "paradise is porous, / intoxicating, and has very few / whole people in it." Her eloquent reportage reminds us that in a world in which every day "someone's life is a meteor let go," innocence is no longer possible. Copyright © 1996, Boston Review. All rights reserved.

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