

Unfinished Exit

by Claudia Wysocky

I keep thinking
about the time in high school
when you drew
me
a map of the city,
I still have it somewhere.
It was so easy
to get lost
in a place where all the trees
look the same.
And now
every time I see
a missing person's poster
stapled to a pole,
all I can think is
that could have been me.
Missing,
disappeared.

But there are no
posters for people
who just never came back
from vacation, from college,
from life.
You haven't killed yourself
because you'd have to commit to a
single exit.
What you wouldn't give to be your cousin Catherine,
whom you watched
twice in one weekend get strangled nude

in a bathtub onstage
by the actor who once
filled your mouth with quarters at
your mother's funeral.
The curtains closed and opened again.
We applauded until
our hands were sore.

But you couldn't shake the image of
her lifeless body,
the way she hung there like a
marionette with cut strings.
And now every time you try to write a poem,
it feels like a
eulogy.
So even though you haven't
found the perfect ending yet,
you keep writing.
For Catherine, for yourself, for all the lost
souls
who never got their own
missing person's poster.
Because as long as there are words on a page,
there is still hope for an unfinished exit
to find its proper
ending.