

THE RESTROOM WAS SHUT

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In seventh grade the
restroom next door to my
English class was shut to student use.
We never knew quite why,
but when his churning stomach
juiced copper into my good friend's mouth,

and the period bell sounded his release;
he had but one choice, to go down,

his skin the color of bone,
ash beneath the hollows of his eyes.

I, buried in the throng of adolescents,
and my own daily trifles,
had forgotten he was in front of me
until we reached the stairs.
shuffling among the clumps of students
squeezing through the double door
frame into the one-story stairwell.

At the sound's start someone had
dumped rocks onto the stairs.
Students turned, craned and stepped
away from him to identify the sound.
A scream, a pretty girl's arm
splattered in vomit.

Clenching back a second contraction,
he reared away from her and those nearest on his left
to the railing open to the switchback stairs below.
The quiver in his lip broke a deluge
upon the inquiring upturned faces.
The continuous body of humanity began to

undulate and part from his path,
pressing, sliding against the far wall as he
descended, a Godzilla of barf,
screams birthing screams.
I stepping carefully,
leaning around him to ask if he was ok,

ducking back as his lips parted again.
He was not the only student to leave school that day,
a shattered girl found crying in the bathroom,
others with wet hair from lavatory sinks.
You may ask why this happened,
I will tell you,

In seventh grade the restroom was shut.