

Restaurant Rondo

by John Riley

Before she flushes the toilet the world is spinning. She lifts her head and looks around. She's never been in this bathroom before. There's a clock of all things above the door and the water in the sink is running. Did she turn it on to cover the sound of her retching? She's unsure of the time but knows the clock is broken. Both hands point toward 6 and it was well past 8 when he said he wasn't sure about anything anymore.

Soon the room will come to a stop. Reaching for the lever she remembers that all the smart men once thought everything perfect in the whole universe moved in a circle. She pulls the lever and clings to the seat and watches the water swirl down. What was the world like when God's favorite shape was O? Was Eve's apple the shape of a ball? Did the planets and the stars and the moon move like merry-go-round ponies?

"Ponies," she giggles and stumbles to her feet and orders the room to stop spinning. She lifts her arms and stretches her body into a 1 and wonders when God changed his mind. Did he decide on a night like tonight that everything should move in a line? Did the circle collapse under the pressure to be perfect? Did one end of the new line ever drink too much wine?

She lowers the lid and sits on the throne and laughs at this joke no one told her. He's waiting outside with a concern in his eyes that she will see right through. The toilet insisted we dance, she'll whisper, and he'll frown and say it's time to put you to bed. She won't tell him she knows the phone in his pocket has a new glow. She won't say, say to me the words I heard you say to your phone.

Back on her feet the clock is still frozen. The flowing water is warm. There are two types of soap and tiny cloth towels folded on a gray

marble shelf. She fills her hands with water and sucks it up, closes her eyes, opens her eyes, spits it out. The mirror won't let her stop staring. He knocks on the door, calls out her name. The water's still running. She freezes in place. One day we will all stop spinning.

