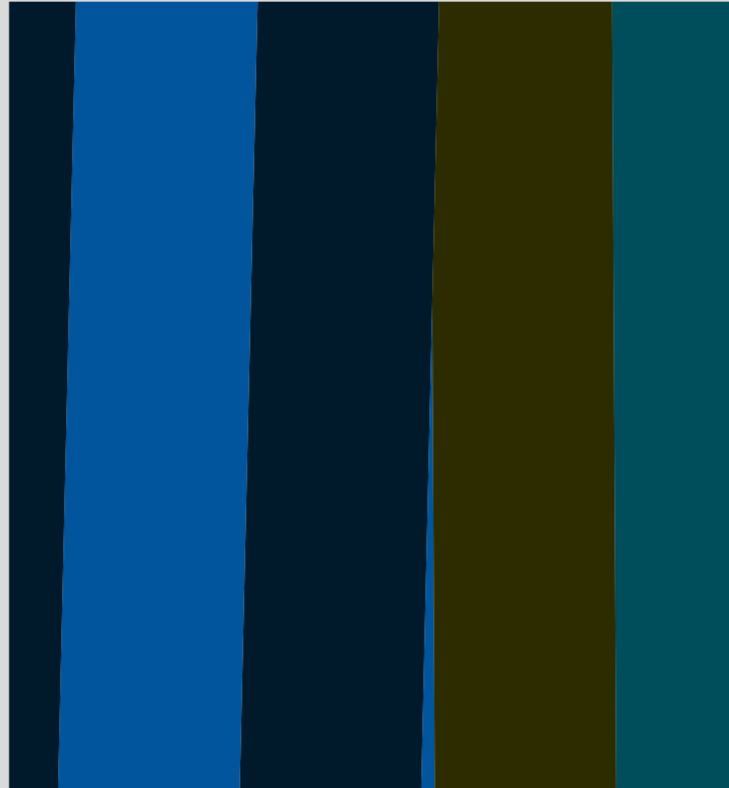


*A House in the Forest*

A house in the forest, and you approach timidly, afraid of your own dream, the one where the teacher is your mistress and the prom queen is your girlfriend and you feel a pleasure that will not end. You approach slowly, concerned a thief might bolt from the door, chased by an ugly old man with a gun, who once the thief is gone turns to you in alarm, as if to say, "How did you find me?" or "Where are your parents?"—but you hear nothing, having already tiptoed through the house and jumped into the darkness on the other side, where the forest is really, finally, a forest.



*Behold*

The prettier a thing is, the more it pains us. Upholstery and our hearts ache. A fountain and our eyes throb. Sleep is the only blindfold that works, but dreaming undoes it. We are like invalids at an orgy. The cries and colors are too much. Prettiness itself is insoluble, and infinite, a number unraveling on any street corner. How many ways can hair be cut? I ask. And skirts? If a calculus of cup-sizes fails to produce a single breast, but instead teaches us to desire all breasts, what then? God in his ignorance made a race of Fausts, who want happiness dropped in their laps: daughters, gold coins, keys to the kingdom. And yet, I am modest. Only my imagination is weak. It consorts with ghosts, family ghosts and foreign ghosts; it savors letters of every description. When I look inward, heels click in the distance, nightgowns move towards me, necklaces speak to me... A fountain patters and tinkles and turns green. But what happens? One thing. A stone lion grimaces in my face.

