

Good. Clean. Kill.

Tiah Lindner Raphael



Kim Mathews Wheaton
Midsummer

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The militia man outside the federal building wears camouflage and we lock eyes in a lifetime of

recognition. It's a high school basketball game, a rodeo, a turkey shoot as he tips his head in my direction, turns me fifteen again, cornfields for hair, the sheen of winter wheat sprouting across my skin, dragging main street in an '83 Pontiac: my Columbia, my Blue Mountains, my Umatilla, the gully I call my chest, stage gulch, dead man, herons in the creek bottom, a pioneer grave on the unfarmable slope of hill behind home from which the lazy hunters drop injured pheasants and my father's billy club teaches me all the ways to identify a bad kill. It's the world of my grandfather, all the men in Carhartts and flannels, pick-up trucks, factory jobs, trips to the packing house, the feed and seed, the meat locker and fall when my father goes duck hunting, birds laid out by the shed. I learned how to say good, clean, kill the same way I learned to name each feather, touching the forest green head, the curve of each cooling breast.



Tiah Lindner Raphael may live in Portland, Oregon, but her roots run farther east. To this day, she is most happy when her feet are in a creek or her hands are in the dirt. Tiah's work has most recently appeared in *Kestrel*, *Cloudbank* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

