MEDUSA REDUX

You were of two minds about everything country or city, teaching or retirement, lesbian or straight sex. When you judged that poetry contest and couldn't choose between two finalists (male or female)

and we used my Magic 8 Ball to pick the winner (male), you made me promise never to tell. Just as, years earlier, when I was your student and you showed me a poem you wrote about screwing my classmate (male)

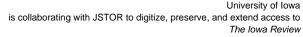
you whispered *secret*, *secret*. Your skirt bunched up around your hips was one of its images. Your pull always had a push, your sweetness a sting. "Disingenuous former mentor," is what I dubbed you

in a poem. Why, knowing that, did I let you back in my life? Bring you to my city, champion you to my own students, expose them to your threadbare workshop style: spurious nurturing, ingratiating praise.

When I called you the day my dog died, you said, "I don't know what you expect me to say." Your obdurate rebuff put me off. Then, at Starbucks, as I reiterated how much pain I was in, you sat mute,

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stone-faced. Furious at my grief for keeping me from you. Who would fix your computer glitches? Or placate your complaints about your editor, your book designer, the director of your low-residency?

Or help unstick you from your latest mess (an affair with a married man)? So you ran to my colleagues, my students, my friends—to anyone who would listen—with your self-deflecting, under-

mining chant: *What's wrong with David?* Thus, during the hardest loss of my life, your resentment twisted, hissed behind my back. At that reading, the last time I had to see you, I waited till I was ready to

leave, till the crowd thinned a path. I walked up, looked in your eyes—those hopeless windows—and said, "Goodbye." I knew from your stricken expression that you knew: I was through with you. After I left the room,

your tears (it was later conveyed) coerced bystanders to comfort you. At our closest, we joked that we'd been soul mates in a past life: husband and wife reciting poems to each other in a cabin in the woods.

Now, in my mind's eye, I see a woman wrapped in a peasant shawl, hands red with the blood of her dead children, moaning *What did I do? What did I do?* She disappears into the Black Forest.

DAVID TRINIDAD

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I see you (one of our last encounters), caught for a heartbeat like an animal on a dark road, eyes flashing from martyr-pain to selfrighteous rage, then bolting, to avoid me, towards an exit I knew was locked.

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