

PEP VENTOSA

Bay Bridge II, 2014
Archival print, 32 x 24 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

LINDA MICHEL-CASSIDY

Things I Thought About

When Stuck
Behind a Crash
on the Bay Bridge,
Remembering
the Earthquake

Shark stories
Acid green next to tomato red
Headlamps
That image of the car dangling from the bridge's crumpled edge
The Guinness Book of World Records man with the longest fingernails
The pressing down of an index finger on a single Bubble Wrap cell
The *LOVE* sculpture
Kids trick-or-treating in costumes they can't possibly understand
Those photos Diane Arbus made at the institution on Halloween
Tumbleweeds
Beanbag chairs
The amount of trouble caused by one beanbag chair opened up with a steak knife, "just to see"
Lilac and brown
The pressure drop before an electric storm
The things one could flatten under a steamroller
My father's bowling-ball-crushed middle finger
The way little kids bowl from between their legs
The fat blue-and-white pen that has four colors of ink
But that finger, shaped like a beaver tail or a Ping-Pong paddle
When the cell phone in the theater belongs to someone else
Pea Soup Andersen's
Half a house in tow on the freeway
Catching a mosquito without crushing it
Sharpeners with special angles just for golf pencils
The rhythm of the giant mop-thing in drive-through car washes
Thinking it's Sunday, and it turns out to be Saturday
Arriving ten minutes early
Arriving at all
An old woman wearing an exuberant puffy hat
Fortune-telling fish
Being afraid of reading the tarot
The water-treading test in junior lifeguard class at camp
The crunch at the end of a glass of Tang
Cereal for dinner

The person in the next car singing to the song that's on my radio
A car dangling from the bridge's crumpled edge
Road sign cows with Hula-Hoops
Scott, a full-on adult, believing in sea monkeys
The small victory of opening a vacuum-sealed jar by whacking it on the floor
Not remembering if it's better to have the windows up or down in a sinking vehicle
Mariachi bands
The redwood tree that you can drive through, except it's gone now
Rubber band balls
What it would be like to be rescued by the Jaws of Life
What it would be like to operate the Jaws of Life
The dog in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*
The smell of Play-Doh
No cavities
Dogs who walk sassier after their haircuts
Meteor showers
Eavesdropping on, but not having to converse with, conspiracy theorists
All the socks matching up
Pink Pearl erasers
Giant pumpkins
Nightmares about genetic engineering
A whale breach
A whale, beached
Backyard trampoline
SpongeBob drawn in the dirt on a rearview window
The bridge's crumpled edge
An old ad about how the Volkswagen Beetle floats
Orange and brown and golden yellow
Pudding skin
Tingling all new-like after peeling off a wetsuit
How a car can float a bit before it drops into the water
The trick of the nine times table
Stalactites and stalagmites
Hard-boiled egg slicer
My brother's fingernail caught in a manual ice crusher
A pink wash of blood over ice cubes
Having the jumper cables
Dust devils
A semi toppled by a twister

Barbecue smell
Mouth-roof pizza burn
The reverse hangover of family Thanksgiving
Hot-pink flowered rain boots
The burned air after a fireworks grand finale
Eating ramen noodles for nonfinancial reasons
Tide charts
Having once known, but now forgotten, the stats for hypothermia
Nope, it's hyperthermia
Seeing an eagle when hiking alone
A cousin with encyclopedic knowledge of eighties heavy-metal hair bands
The phone call when that cousin's house burned down
Former mail trucks as personal vehicles
Really big croutons
Pop Rocks and stories about child actors from *The Brady Bunch*
The jingle of a burned-out light bulb
Big-eyed kitten painted on velvet
Saturday Night Fever
The cloud that looks like Alfred Hitchcock
My bike, unstolen
Realizing the dragging muffler sound is coming from some other vehicle
The gift of a stolen street sign with my name on it
Sharpie smell
When people can't remember the name of saguaro cacti, so they act it out
Waking up to a new haircut
Steaming stack of pancakes bigger than my head
Caffeine churn on an empty stomach
A thumbs-up from a car twin
How a car floats a bit before it drops into the water
Snow day
Brand new ChapStick
Fancy Italian paper clips
Enough tent pegs
Living somewhere that can't be MapQuested
Wondering if GPS works underwater
The underwater swim contest at camp
The kid who passed out doing the underwater swim
The spoon on the nose trick
Hurling a fistful of Super Balls in a small room

The luge
Pinecone art
A kiss from the very tall boy who won the underwater swim
Houseguests who bring coffee roasted in their hometown
Unrolling a pecan twirl
A nasty toupee
The toupee worn by my uncle and where it went after he died without a fuss at ninety-four
Buried treasure
A haunted house that's truly got a ghost
Blade-of-grass kazoo
The pleasure-pain principle as applied to the tearing of a cuticle
Road trip Slurpees
Hand-knit socks
Old-school roller skates
The worry that I would leave no trace
The sense of backward drift when the car next to me pulls forward
A house in need of a ghost. A place to move into, but later, swinging about like a brand new phantom, haunting and not haunting. A place that waits for me, just in case.

Linda Michel-Cassidy's writing can be found in *Eleven Eleven*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *No Tokens*, *Jabberwock Review*, and other journals. She is a contributing editor at *Entropy*, where she edits podcast reviews. Her criticism and interviews appear in the *Rumpus*, *Electric Literature*, and *Heavy Feather Review*, among other journals. She works for the reading series and press Why There Are Words and conducts interviews for the Mill Valley, California, Public Library podcast, *The Great Eight*. She has an MFA from Bennington College's Writing Seminars and another, in visual arts, from the California College of the Arts. Michel-Cassidy lives on a houseboat in Sausalito, California.