

Killing the Angel

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*a literary
experiment
inspired
by
Virginia
Woolf*



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Out of Context

It's moonless, moist and puddled,
an oddly quiet succession
to the mayhem of The Fourth here
in Provincetown, so I'm startled
when I meet the wild dog you'd
described, the one I'd read about,
ratty coat, come from the dunes
back legs low.

Down on the strip,
seeing people in pairs or clusters,
many men holding hands, I walk
alone, surprised, self-conscious,
giddy, my hands pressed together
like some devotional, some nun
in my Novenas, head bowed,
an undefined "thou"

on my mind.

I'm Hester Prynne before the towns-
people, a woman partnerless
and persecuted, downright
pissed off, my incantation:
*"I bear my chalice safely
through a throng of foes."* I pass
Governor Bradford and his First
Encounter, where a sequined man
sings "You're So Vain," past a trading
post, past the wharf, to the gallery
where Tristan is remembered,
his name from *d'être triste* –

to be sad –

Tristan who loved Isolde the Fair
but had to surrender her
to Mark, to accept his second
choice, who lied when he lay dying,

in need of love's medicines:
She said the sail was black, even
as she saw the white sail coming
into harbor, which meant his death,
of course.

Yet even near such
sad romance, here laughter erupts
around me like the bangs and flashes
of two nights before when streets were
swarming. Such cheer, camaraderie,
this sense of irony, where
even in the rain and darkness,
with danger in the shadows, we bear
these gifts before us, waiting for some
chance encounter, some choice to love.