

YONA HARVEY

TURQUOISE

& then the woman who wants
to sleep with my husband
sends him a card with Frida Kahlo's sepia
face peering through it & he
begins reading the note aloud to me, as if
the words might bring the woman back
across the line she crossed that summer
he mentioned her name for the first time.
Then I think his brush with temptation
isn't as noble as he'd like to believe, more like
cleaning the house when it gets dirty—he could
mark it on a table of triumphs, but, at the end of the day,
it mostly amounts to what he is supposed to do.

Men are so clueless sometimes,
which isn't a revelation, but occasionally needs restating
& brings to mind something I read about
Lenny Kravitz composing penitent lyrics for Lisa Bonet,
for committing particular betrayals
to song, how he believed the pair might reconcile
as soon as Lisa heard the album he'd dedicated to her.
Women are clueless sometimes, too,
like the one who cried to me on a campus bench
that she wanted to be an artist, to travel,
while the others rushed to lunch, to more classes.
& what should she do? Then I thought,

*People are always asking questions whose answers
they already know & That's a great necklace she's wearing*

which I told her, but she recoiled when I said
 wearing turquoise jewelry & Frida Kahlo skirts
 doesn't make women artists, which was probably the cruelest
 thing

I'd ever said to a young woman, but exactly how I felt
 watching her fuss over the ruffles of her long, black skirt.
 These days, Frida Kahlo appears like a god to whom I've
 prayed, like accessories that shake at the bottom of a woman's
 shopping bag, a loose divinity of feel-good postcards &
 magnets

rocking on paper handles in the crease of an upright arm.
 This is what I think when I ask my lover to stop
 reading the note he wants me to render harmless.

Does a woman's affection for Frida make her
 my comrade? Years ago, with my head wrapped & bracelets
 jangling, I might have answered yes. But when I ask
 Who's Lupe, Who's Frida, Who's Diego? I can't help but
 conclude

someone's at work on a grand cliché I'm supposed to buy into
 & there's nothing harmless about Frida Kahlo, exquisite painter
 of stitches & steel, thorns & wombs & vaginas—something
 utterly

misleading about Frida's face on a 4 x 4 note card, a little
 too neat & too square, which makes sense in the American
 sense

of matinee love or lust or art or what passes for art, or living
 the life of an artist, those heroes & heroines dangling over
 the cliffs of vanity, begging for a little more rope.