

HILLARY KOBERNICK<sup>1</sup>

## The Furloughed Missionaries in Children's Church

Praise the emaciated cow in the slideshow, the gummy  
water buffalo. Praise the wooden cart with a hole busted  
in its floor, but still pulling a sick child over potholes  
to the country doctor. Praise the country doctor

who knows little, but enough here and there to save  
a child in this world. Praise the chlorine tablets dissolving  
in thick-walled water bottles, praise the wide-brimmed hats  
and the way dust glued to sweat makes sunscreen.

Lift your voice: praise the dead air waiting for a song  
each steaming morning walking from compound to need.  
Praise this basement, the pipes and wires and whirring  
overhead projectors spinning in endless dusty rotation.

Praise this hot room and the hard-backed chairs in which you sit  
with small aching back, the closest you get to suffering.  
Praise the end of furlough and their return to Cambodia.  
And pray for you, pale child, stranded in sufficiency, unblessed

never knowing how it feels to lack so much of everything.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hillary Kobernick has competed at the National Poetry Slam six times, representing Atlanta and Chicago. She holds a master of divinity degree and pastors a Mennonite congregation in Illinois. Her poems have been featured on Button Poetry's YouTube Channel and have been published in journals including DecomP, Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal, and The Christian Century.*