Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays
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Microkeratome

It was only when I turned thirty-three that I saw the bad dictators had finally started dying. It was only when I turned thirty-seven that I saw that all the bad dictators had been replaced by new bad dictators and things were as much on the verge of apocalypse as ever. When Kim Jong II died, North Korea launched a missile to remind the rest of the world that even the starving cry when the only salvation they believed in turned out to be a regular man who smoked cigars and drank cognac and ate foie gras with a reduction of blackberry demi-glace.

What do you do, besides make lame jokes, to get your mind off North Korea? In the winter, the flags of *Bouteloua curtipendula* bend forward in the wind. The grass is drought-tolerant, with good erosion control. It is a threatened species in Michigan. It is your job not to make a metaphor of this but you can’t help it. What you see is this: the seedpods look like steps on a ladder. They rise up toward the wind. Better for catching wind than climbing. The grasses, blue flowers in spring, have devised a way out of here. You step on the blades like they’ll take you somewhere but you crush them with your heavy foot and your misplaced sense of order.

Still. The purple and blue flowers, if you focus on them, if you stare at them long enough, they turn to blur, and you can obliterate almost every other sense of meaning. There are so few blue foods. You don’t even think about eating them.