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Untitled, Oil on Canvas // Gambler's Luck

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Untitled, Oil on Canvas

Oils on canvas are
sensitive to the
oils on skin are

sensitive to my touch
as I reach out and
feel the ridges left

behind by your brush.
I wonder if you ever
let your hand wander

over the piece you
made, maybe to
check if it was

dry or just to
feel the hardened
paint imprint itself

under your index
finger for a second before
you move it away and

mark your signature
in the corner. I want
to think that this

paint was something we
both traced ourselves across,
decades apart,

a silent connection
forged when I realized
I have so little of you.

If we can run our fingers
over here again, I can have
something not colored by

the stories of worn adults or
my forgetful childhood eyes but instead
by the delicate movement of

your wrist, a paintbrush, oil on
canvas and all the time needed
to trace our fingers across it.

SUSAN ROMANCE

Gambler's Luck

I have been to the afterlife—
not heaven or hell, but just
after (and, yes, I am still alive).

The afterlife that's
been fed to the living is
a lie, there are no heavenly

pits where fires arise. No,
the afterlife is a casino.
Flashing lights and

blinking noises, the dead sit
around tables, gambling away
memories from the future.

There are no clocks
in the casino (as is tradition),
one spends a lifetime searching

for the soul out of their grasp. I found
him sitting at a blackjack table
(my favorite), and he lost

my high school graduation on
a bad hand. But when
he strikes twenty-one, my future

is in his palm. He smiles, but suddenly
I want more, I want to know if he
remembers the weather on

the day I was born or what
the last gift he gave me was.
I need to speak to you

one more time, but the moment
my hand is on your shoulder
I find I am no longer

in that casino, but instead, at a
lakeside grave and in a future
gambled away.