

The Push

Driving home late at night, I came upon a deer lying dead in the centre of Canyon River road. It had been a long day, a hard day, one of the worst of my life. My sore body demanded sleep, and my sore mind demanded a vice, something to slip me into numbness. I wanted nothing to do with this deer, but the universe had decided I would have no choice in dealing with its bloodied carcass. Leaving the engine running, I exited the car. I didn't bother to pull over, no one should be driving when the night is this silent and deep. Most people roll them off the road into the canyon, so that they may be swept away by the river's hungry rapids, so that they may be mother nature's problem and not one's own. A dark stain streaked the asphalt, a trail of death stemming from the deer's broken body. As the space between us grew smaller and smaller, I began to make out more of her details. Tawny in colour, big, black eyes, swollen belly. Swollen belly. Gingerly, I touched it. I could not help myself from the truth.

My cold fingers were met with warmth, such a familiar warmth. It's the kind of warmth that comes with being alive, being a warm-blooded creature pitted against nature and nurture. In my eyes, this young doe, this recent kill, had suddenly become illuminated. Her belly glowed. It was like she had swallowed a star, jumped up and plucked it from this very night sky as if it were a ripe fruit, heavy and sweet. A plum maybe- yes, a plum. Something with a pit. Now, deep within her, this pit had taken root in her womb.

Crouched on that narrow road, submerged in pure dark, with my palms now flat against her side, I hesitated. I thought of the pills I had been prescribed and array metal trinkets the doctor had used. I thought of the injection, how the needle glinted under the fluorescent lights. I thought of the pain, how it was like getting my soul sucked out of me, how I had been hot and cold and lightheaded and nauseous all at the same time. More than once my body had been invaded, once by the doctors and their instruments, and then again before that, by my own plum pit.

I could sense the wilderness listening. My gaze remained fixated on the doe's rounded flank, but I was not looking at her- I was looking through her, studying instead the shape of her fetal fawn. Like a comma, it curls in on itself. Like a comma, it causes one to hold their breath.

Knowing what I had known all along, that I had no other choice, I pushed.