

Puck

He says hello though she never responds, times his deliveries with her lunch; she sits in the store room on bales of paper towels, he in the back of the truck, the doors open between them, ham on wheat, no breeze. Sometimes, she hears the hiss of a popped cap or a match strike—take-off of a crow's thick wings. The day he shouts about the cardinals, she goes outside, he hops down, & the bottles chink in their crates. His jeans bag around his pelvis; grit creases his hands black. He's not looking at the sky. They start sitting together; they start talking about cats, he has a cat, about what they chase & eat. His likes to drink from the toilet, hers likes to sleep in the sink, & that's the flint—cats who like plumbing. He takes her hand, squeezes the tip of a finger & turns it red, the way a cousin told her was the best way to find lipstick—by matching shades with a flush. But she never wears lipstick, her hair is frizzy, & her fingers are crooked; she holds them bent & perched for a trill. She blushes as he touches her cheek; everything he touches reddens & swells. He looks at her mouth, & she says her cat, the way he chases her hair bands around her room, she needs a new set each month. She moved her bed last week & found a dozen goals he scored; she blushes again. When he bends to kiss her, she's talking Blackhawks, how she went to a game once with her uncle, & just when the fight breaks out she whispers *stop stop I don't*, her uncle never smokes anything but pipes, she doesn't want to price frozen corn forever, doesn't want to be the woman found dead when junk mail clots the door slot and the house reeks. He says relax your mouth, right now don't talk so much, & she squeezes her fingers till her nails bloom, & all she feels is the stiff base of her neck melt into prickles, & his lips, soft with tiny slates of dry skin.