

Melissa Pope

VELVET GROUND

counting submissions for you . . . the one who tunnels into my dark twitching thumbs . . . cold damp steps . . . pigeon house . . . lilac vines . . . arched doorways . . . cold mornings cold hands climbing into warm blankets . . . wrapped in our familiar smells. Even without you my body remembers and reminds me . . . in my delusions i'm waiting in disguise waiting with intention waiting for refuge . . . throw a swatch of meat for my bloodlike lipstick . . . i suck what sucks the nourishment out of my system . . . i tend to my sickness in private parties without laughter . . . unconscious and waiting for a child a smothered being packed in a suitcase ready to leave but cannot move cannot see carried in image and safety wrap. Jokes and promises for the game i call mine . . . you can't play anymore as i sit and play with myself in darkness . . . damp moisture dark rings and circles . . . drive by glances . . . going underground i spy at night . . . you sleep and i stand near your window with a torch . . . pressed against flowers in your sills as my computer screen reflects the inside of your glasses. Denial growing like corn in the desert . . . i've got popcorn and cream corn and corn on the cob . . . i'm full of nothing but corn . . . just another mistake as i trash my husk . . . i look for your wrung eyes and sparse hair . . . i want . . . like a rotten child unwrapping christmas gifts . . . or a rain stick never turned over. Take my skin . . . you already have . . . it's piled beside your bed . . . neft to dirty laundry . . . you won't throw me away but you won't forgive me or give back my skin . . . it's been punctured and faded . . . you play the piano for it sometimes . . . pile it up on a wooden rocking chair . . . give the chair a push then you begin to play as you hum with your eyes closed again my skin feels the bone of your voice . . . rocking . . . you rock on the bench neft to my skin on the chair . . . later i'm heaped in the closet for the night with the rest of my things you won't return . . . i don't mind . . . unable to move without your permission i'm swimming skinless walking in water and sleeping with evaporated blankets that chill me as i stare at my uncovered veins circulating in the mirror . . . gravity has not pulled me apart even though you keep my skin locked in your closet. My nylons are full of scabs . . . i wring them in hot water . . . calculating my time . . . setting my alarm clock while you tend to children of your own and the

flowers in your sills . . . landscaping your desert yard . . . you don't remember me as often as i remember you . . . they don't know you have my skin either . . . do they? . . . don't worry i won't tell . . . but can you explain one more time . . . i need to hear one more time . . . how i hung in your garage after you singled me out and shot me. I still see you in recreations of what i cannot reach . . . black and white photos of you cover my album . . . the fatness of your face, round eyes . . . the back of your neck shivering into convulsions . . . i need you to feed me . . . in the morning at night and when i demand it . . . send the meat this way one more time for my lips to drown in . . . your mouth moves like mine but i still hear nothing . . .