

Insomnia

Wren Murphy

9

As I'm forced to the ground,
breathing in the musty carpet
of a creaking farm house,
I rip my arms from under theirs
as they scream, "Just kiss him!"
Dust stings my eyes as I press myself
into a corner under a Hello Kitty bed,
avoiding their search.

Hours later, I resurface
and find the pitiful boy,
denied what he thought was his.
I regret giving him
my dry, awkward lips.

10

Rebellion appears in highway walks
to smell forest heartbeats.
A red car lurks, watching
brown sketchers with pink highlights.
The crows' feet, snake smile says,
"Get into the car."
My soles crumble like roadkill
on my path home.

I fled before his boot hit the pavement,
but the cop comes an hour later.
My mom insisted, shaking.
"Wanted the county over," the cop says.
"Sexual assault."

12

Puberty grasps hold, unwanted
while trudging through state parks,
screaming at wailing loons
and naming each campfire,
Calcifer, Roy Mustang, Dante.
I use a break to observe
my newly-foreign body
while concealed in my tent's green fabric,

But the back door is open.
Red-shirt man, 30, stares.
I should have seen it.
I say, "I'm so stupid," and not
"Fucking pedophile."

14

A rattling heater, damaged
by invading boys' pencils,
blows a note on my desk,
"Go on a date w/ me?"
Constant giggling, eighth-grade resentment
darken my judgment. It crumples
before his eyes.
But was it a joke?

16

He looms, a tower, over
reflective, speckled floors
marred by wet footprints
and fury spat at an ex,
"Women are irrational."
"Except you and your mom."
You two are the most rational women
I've ever seen."

19

My clothes drip 409 and burger grease,
ice cream stains my chest,
and a new gender falls from my lips.
Customers ask for boobs for proof of lies,
and boss, 60 something, lays a heavy hand on my shoulder.
“Look at what’s in front of our eyes.”
“I can’t see you as not a girl.”
“When you walk, your butt jiggles.”

20

As I rest, the ceiling’s flaws
make a constellation, lulling
me to sleep
before the train of self-loathing
runs through my waking mind.

I will send it toward the fire –
their stares, whistles,
grabbing hands –
and release the smoke to the heavens
to pass over pinprick stars.
As a man lounges in the booth,
I forget the ice and milkshake
And say, “I won’t serve you again.”