

## editor's choice

### safe here, with you

Poetry • Camiell Foulger

i lay in bed,  
in the hotel your father paid for,  
we have two beds, but  
one remains untouched,  
the other with the sheets rumpled and crumpled into a landscape  
of delicate topography,  
your mouth is still hanging open in the embrace of sleep and balance,  
and you breathe in,  
and I breathe out,  
into the silence created  
by the white noise of traffic on a Thursday morning  
in asheville, n.c.

memorizing the angles of your face,  
i continue to question the series of events I always expect but have yet to answer to,  
of a growl of *fags dykes lezbos carpet munchers*  
eyes narrowed to pinpricks,  
we know we will feel the stare of a thousand seas in the omnipresent eye of the people,  
grinding the world to a halt,  
and eliminating what little cause for rebellion we have to bare,  
like the crisp descent of love into a blooming of muted color,  
we still stand together.

but still I find myself thinking there is safety in numbers,  
there is reassurance in youth and girls and a heartbeat,  
there is an unfounded cause for hope in the scent of the compassionate  
and the shape of the quiet indifferent,  
bringing us different fruits of uncertain labors,  
those simply existing to be bolder than before,  
we stare back to hold their eyes between the fingers of our smooth palms  
and clench our teeth.

i breathe in the bite of frost,  
waiting for something mean,  
A tsk of resistance,

hold my hand—I tell you,  
and our intertwined fingers are stiff with cold,  
and our boots shuffle on the pop of loose bricks and uncertain cracks,  
i could tremble for my loss of childhood,  
it's ebbing with the tide.

snow flurries carousing the shock of wind against the glass windows  
we cherish, cherish,  
cherish your bone, your breath, your beautiful brain,  
cradling the innocence of young in love handfuls,  
they are pressed to my chest,  
as I turn to stare into the glass bubble beating back the bite,  
and with each ache,  
i count and wait for a baring of fangs.

try to be morally right,  
try to be appealing,  
you can get away with murder under the guise of a good look and an easy  
smile,  
one that lingers in the corners of your mouth,  
for men have not smiled like wolves,  
or licked their lips, tasting the kill,  
that kill that strides into the sun before them,  
careful and bulldozing the moon and the stars,  
we are gleaming with some intangible, heartrending call,  
we are impossibly afraid but—  
we remain untouchable.

craving creature comforts,  
i fear the assault of the senses the others must feel,  
the one born of:  
two girls holding hands.

girls of septum rings and purple hair,  
doc martens on every pair of feet,  
hair dyed, torn jeans,  
thick, empty guts,  
bleeding into the streets,  
of downtown bustle and brawn.

it is apparent.  
i will always be an outsider,  
masquerading as something more solid and always smiled upon.

in unison,  
we step away from the curb,  
eyes following the stunning hiss of tire and engine,  
air rushing past,  
billowing against ears cool to the touch,  
to say something along the lines of:  
here is my hope and my dream,  
my grit and my pounding pulse,  
to walk together unmarred by the wavering glare of others,  
calm and collected into the bravado of a day's grace,  
quietly accepted without word or shudder.

traditional remains transfixed in the heart of the bible belt,  
my home country,  
my sensual, starlit wound lain open to sunlight and moon,  
the taste of salt between lips,  
and hair tangled around the wrists of two people  
still playing a game of enigma in the middle of the city,  
i can't quite remember how to feel something other than a mystifying sense  
of terror  
bubbling and bubbling and teething along the underside of my chin,  
i can't quite remember the sensation of comfort,  
of feeling perfectly natural in front of the public eye roving over skin and bone,  
over the flicker of the bluest of eyes against the palest of faces,  
over your body,  
over my thinly-veiled smile of discomfort,  
i try to stand corrected.

what a scintillating dream we have engendered on half-truths and the ignorance  
of interpreting a glance incorrectly,  
strangers stifle us with a loss of warmth,  
friction between norm and the disrespected,  
i yearn for sunsets to a story.

but then there is always this:  
you turn to me still,  
lips pursed and fingers curled on your hip,  
knowing what could happen but not caring,  
and you say:  
hold my hand,  
and of course,  
i do.