

New in Town

by Beatrice Louise

We means him saying me plus ideas of people attached to me. It took us two spoons of sugar and half a pot of black coffee to see this. Yellow lines down a stainless sink. We drove there, too, our aunt's house in the country, our aunt who was also we, our apple trees, and time for pickling. Picking and.

He shouted something about control and whispered he wanted to see us soon. There were elsewheres for us to go. I texted some people I had met online. I had met him online but in bodies we met at a coffee shop, and so we told people, we met at this coffee shop, and sometimes the name of the shop, and sometimes directions, spelled out like a recipe. This is how you make carrot cake and drink it with coffee. All my favorite cakes are drunks.

I missed him though after he was no longer we still he persisted. Can a part of we become a not-part? Unapart. Not unaware, but maybe not aware, either. Back to the apples and the aunt, who is old, who rolls her ankles on the apples sometimes. An apple can like a telephone give you a way to call out, damn these goddamn apples. Everywhere underfoot.

And so the picking and pickling and so making Christmas presents out of goddamned ankle rolling apples. Pickled they turn pink and crabby. Perfect stocking stuffers.

I never liked it when you told me what you were owed. We rebelled against it. We hated editing. We licked screens and chewed on circuit boards. We planted mercury and watched columns of silver glitter eight feet tall in fountains from the earth in spring. Wash me in the mercury, you screamed. He had a handsome dial tone, we called him every name but his.

We carved faces in the apples and choked. Stabbed the apples through the pointed tips of a worn picket fence. Past retirement age, we still stand, we find work to do that suits us.

A call center gives ample reason to talk to people who aren't there. The haunted call center was on fire most of the time. Phantom flames and when we got bored or tired or made a sale we burned our ass on the flame, just for something to do. We worked with crooks and down on their luck evil time smugglers.

We met one such smuggler on your front porch but you were out, we told ourselves, you wouldn't care. Fingered by a smuggler, we think, and then stopped thinking. What is the point of chipping paint when you are bored. This inelegant space needs nails, fingernails, mine, and I eat the lead, the faded green under my nails for days. I hope he smells like me and I hope we find you because I am still not done being judged for everything I've done and meant to do, every motion I thought twice before not doing, every word I swallowed. My you are dramatic, he said, and I came, as if to prove it, a punctuation.

