

Call Me

by Darin Beasley

I'm living where I've always lived, in Georgia.

I'm in Isabella's study, her rotary telephone in my lap.

It's 2012. I can't take photos with this camera. That's a joke.

Everything's normal and then it's fucked after I place a phone call to Graham who's living in California. It ends abruptly when Graham concludes before hanging up, "I may as well be dead," a tiny voice so pale and dim, so unlike my friend's convivial nature.

I call back and there's no answer. I think about flying out there.

I haven't eaten.

I'm lonely. That isn't a joke.

I'm hungry.

Once there wasn't enough food for me or Graham. I was starving (always always extremes with me), but it was different for him. Graham wanted to eat all the food he saw, every morsel, and then bust his ass over keeping himself infinitesimally thin—so if the need arose he could perform incredible feats. So he could squeeze between walls, rescue people trapped under collapsed buildings, jump through keyholes, and ride to town windblown on the heads of sewing needles. Or something like that.

Graham dreamed of other impossible things like vanishing under buckwheat pancakes, swimming in a glass of water, he had told me so. He believed in his dreams.

The thin period of Graham was when: Rusty and Graham and Jude and I lived together in the farmhouse, trying to do better by life by doing well to one another.

I don't live there anymore. I moved back to town and moved in again with my grandmother (Isabella) who raised me, but when the four of us lived together, Rusty and Graham and Jude and I had quit eating meat and we looked like granola and tofu and bean sprouts, and if we were so inclined, liquor and funk. We moaned like every man when things were bad and cheered when they were good.

The farmhouse smelled like calendula, dogs, and lavender, cum, dirt and whatever was cooking in the kitchen. Someone was always high, and something if not in the oven was never far from it.

At one point Graham and I fasted and after seven days of it, feeling dizzy, we ate black bean burgers. The burgers were small so they wouldn't make us sick and they tasted incredible. Upon digestion I felt my feet come to life in my sandals. The hair on my toes rose and the hair up Graham's legs lifted out, and Graham said he had a hard-on and the energy went all the way to the top of his head when Jude looked over and said, "Your hair's curling." In the summer heat, one curl rolled down from the crown of Graham's head and flopped over one of his eyes, and another curl spiraled out towards the peak of the opposite ear.

Jude passed a joint around and Rusty confirmed fasting must be magic and praise the sacred cow!

That was a sweet feeling and the joint lifted everyone out of the room onto the second floor porch, you should have seen us rising up like that, no worries, not a care.

Then we cleaned the house and weren't high any longer and went to the grocery stores for more food.

When we came home there were seven messages on the answering machine. We listened to them as we put the food away. The phone was there for emergencies more than anything else so we rarely made or returned calls.

This phone in my lap is red.

It is red and it is cold from the air conditioning. I want to kiss it.

I am thinking about California and a plane ticket. When Graham left for California he was about as thin as someone could get without it becoming an issue.

None of us believed the fast started Graham's obsession with losing weight. He got thin and then he was thinner, and when he was thinner he slept for longer hours and he couldn't remember his dreams. It was rare when he was coming to if he saw a flash of color and maybe heard a voice.

One morning Graham was happy because something had stuck to him and he found himself awake with a memory. He said, "Last night Napoleon called out to me."

