

Beckett not Joyce

by Jane Hammons

Gorgonzola.

It's what she was to bring this time.

Plumtree's potted meat. What it was last time. For all the days and all the nights of Ulysses, passing the book, reading the book. Eating.

Underwood, she'd said putting five cans of deviled ham on the table, apologizing. No Plumtree's. Something funny to them she didn't get. Maybe if she'd read the book. She'd understood just then with cans of ham in her hands, they were at the professor's house on the Ides of March to read what most had read. All those hours there she could have been at work. Them counting pages, her counting bills not tucked between her breasts.

Now for the cheese. And another chance.

Franchini's. The one who'd felt her up on the Ides when she fell asleep her head in his lap while they read and ate and ate and read the book said get it there.

All the names the labels the places everything so special and just right she thought surely Safeway had Gorgonzola. One requirement shy and Irish Lit the only thing that fit into her schedule. So she took it thinking there would be reading and writing not so much shopping and eating and talk talk talk.

She stood at the counter eyeing the butcher the bloody apron the meats. Did he also have some cheese?

He showed her all the cheese at such a price. More work time lost to the end of semester eat and read. But she'd do it right this time. She got a pound then two three pounds of cheese. Four. Why not? It did look nice in waxy wrap slipped into the paper bag with Franchini's printed red and green.

A lot of cheese a lot of stink. It must be what they liked. In her backpack it sat atop the great Irish works of Irish masters. If only she'd found time to read.

She arrived to talk of buttered toast and biscuit tins and lobster that she'd never had, went to the kitchen for a plate to set her handsome lump of molding cheese upon figuring to serve it grand. She never smiled. That's what the one who'd felt her up had said so now she smiled and thought she'd try some talk because it was the end of a whole long semester and she'd said so little nothing to measure up to what she'd heard.

She carried the plate to the table. When a few turned to look she flashed the smile that earned tips as did her tits and cried Voila! James Joyce's cheese!

Beckett not Joyce the feeler upper scoffed. There was coughing too and shuffling. They went back to their talk talk talk. She went to her backpack found Beckett not Joyce and lay More Pricks than Kicks upon the table. Tearing it into tasty strips she spread the cheese and ate it.

