

Cut

by kate hill cantrill

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This will be awful the words clunked onto the page as if they were fat-soled shoes kicked off in the room corner, female ginkgo ooze squeezed into treads. That smell, this will be rotten, the man asked for no more calls, the buzz in the pocket holding back his legs from moving on.

If he would allow a call or a brief note—how about a brief note—suggesting tight hip flexors not me what did I do but crawl into that pocket and dance until he answered me?

Effluvium is such a lovely word so *hey surprise* to find it covers rancid butter, vomit, fertile ginkgo fruit trekked in from the pavement, the tree brought first to Philly and admired for its toughness. Just walk around the fruit I say but then I think of something I'd like to tell him and consider my phone and not my feet.

The man had a weird idea about my city so walking through it proved him wrong. See, I said, we really do have lovely parks, best-ever sandwiches, art galleries, museums, trees. His stomach turned but I suggested that the smell was almost sweet if you worked through the initial gag and let it settle on your tongue. God, this is terrible the words so desperately trying to be kind when really, if he'd take a note, I'd write that clearly he has never worked through anything that took some effort and instead just cut the cord although who uses cords these days—or wait, perhaps that idiom suggests umbilical and has nothing whatsoever to do with phones.

Apparently the Ginkgo species is threatened and huggers sometimes fight when cities try to cut them down. I say fight it and they'll just plant fewer next time, they'll go and plant something folks won't make a stink about if they need to chop it. I think they're called suckers and when you step on them they snot onto the ground to release that foul miasma and sometimes make you slip.

The man used to make me hold his arm as we walked—Hold me, he'd say—and so I didn't fear that sort of fall. I'd slide my hand into his pocket and feel as if my whole self sat there, silent in the cup of cloth.

The other fall I feared because he told me that an old girlfriend came by his place and he just shut the door right in her face—slammed the door, he said, but when I winced he said, I mean I closed it—either way I thought I'd gag because we were walking and the pavement lay covered in that vomitous fruit.

The city should just cut these down, he said.

This sucks the words so non-committal but that's because he asked for no more phone calls and still the questions come to me. You can't just go and cut them, I mean you *can*, but Jesus *why*? How do you stop your heart from pumping blood I mean the trees are part of the city now you can't just go and sniff out all the females, let them bloom but chop them down just before their fruit gets fertilized. One option here is cross breeding the sexes and planting these because then they wouldn't stink so bad but still they'd spread their seeds and quit feeling so god damned threatened. I mean, these trees are tougher than atomic bombs—this is a fact, see Hiroshima—and medicinally alone they're worth a little bit of effort.

The man once kissed my mouth and said I was his healer.

Cut fifty pounds of leaves and squeeze them into pills or drops and he'll remember me and lose the tinnitus—the ringing in his ears—although I haven't made a call for quite some time not since he cut me off not since he asked for no more contact although it feels like years it's been like days and days and days.

