

Them

by Meg Pokrass

You would hate it if you knew how many times I apply lipstick now that you're gone. I'm putting it on, like, every five minutes to get through the next fifteen, though I know they use fish scales to make it, and it's like killing fish to put on lipstick for no reason. Nobody usually sees my champagne-grape stained lips except myself, and two adorable medical professionals.

If I had been a cat you probably would have kept me forever, even with an incurable disease. I think about that every time I clean the litter pan, especially late at night. I clean it too often because it makes the cats love each other more, and also because I can smell

how sad I really am in the unpleasant odor of their piss, which I've read glows under black light.

In bed, my eyelids behave like cheap polyester drapes, unable to keep out the light. I wake from dreams about us walking nowhere... covered with butterflies. I can taste you with my feet the way butterflies taste leaves and flowers. Without you here, I notice too much about how the town is changing, new money moving in, teenage girls with their rubbery, flat stomachs. They walk around cold-eyed, like billboards about nothing.

Sometimes, I drive to the Taste It where they use organic bags. As I shop, I try not to gawk at girl's stomachs like I used to try not to stare at perfect front lawns. If I had a flat stomach, and a perfect lawn, and if I were not dying - you might have stayed here on my sofa, drinking beer and burping to mark your territory.

I'm a sloth, it's what we had in common. And the fact that our left eyes feel much more connected to the intuitive parts of our brains than our right eyes do.

The first time we made love, I remember how we talked about the fact that bulls are really color blind, and how a red garment has nothing to do with their rightful anger. How just having to cope with a cape being waved at you by some short murderer dressed up like a kid on Halloween would be bad enough.

