

Frail Flowers, Sitting Monks

by Meg Worden

The world is slick as alabaster, taking the guesswork out of the rain. Junction Road moves like thick grease under the tires of my '89 Skyhawk. The old car's making a clicking noise somewhere underneath the high-beam switch and the damn things won't turn on. There's still blood stains on the back seat where the cream panel is torn away from the springs.

Not a day goes by I don't smell her in the tree leaves, in the bottom of my gin glass or in the subtle shrug of afternoon off of the shoulders of night. Nausea pools in my throat when I remember her long legs, the way her ankle bones stuck out so far they bruised my thighs.

I try again with the high-beam switch. Click, click, click. It's hard to see the curves that hug broad, sharp drops beside the highway. I'm just avoiding 'em out of habit anyway, out of some incognito burn to live. Not because I don't want to go over the ridge.

You can love someone to mush, I think. Rub them out when silken lies rot your brave dreams of picket fences, when meals turn cold and resentment tightens like a leather corset around your ribs. Sincerity is for rubes, I think, for frail pagoda flowers and sitting monks. Not for a drifter like me.

