Nativity Love Song

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“H-Harris, no!”
“No, seriously, what the fuck was that!? A heavy boot landed near my head, its twin stamping my stomach hard. Sparks flashed in my vision. I barely had a second to inhale before it crashed down on me again.
“S-Stop-p!” I gasped hard, choking on the word.
“Don’t be such a pussy and take a beating, yeah!?” With that he delivered a swift kick to my thigh. The layers of garment barely padded the blow as I reeled in pain. “You’re right,” he walked over to my gun which lay just behind him “Let’s kill the damn thing.” Approaching the thicket where the rabbit lay squirming, Harris raised his gun; ready to bash the poor creature into oblivion.

“NO!”
Everything happened all in an instant. Something within me snapped. I no longer cared how big Harris was, or what he could do to me. I don’t recall launching myself from the ground, but I was instantly upon him. I batted wildly at his face, his stupid face, his stupid face with its faint moustache and acne. My hands plowed into his yellow eyes, shutting them off. I punched through him; to the rabbit, to my father, to my uncle, all of them. To everyone who made me, who made Harris, just everyone. My heart pounded in my ears, and all I could hear was my own coursing blood. I don’t recall when the gun went off; last I remember I was trying to claw it from his grip. My eyes wouldn’t shut as I saw his boots running off beyond the trees, a dark figure disappearing into the wooded sanctuary. Then, I fell into an inky blackness where no sound could reach me, where things were at peace.

I came to much later. Twilight blue spanned the sky, and stood in stark contrast to the shimmering snow. The trees cast shadows far into the field, their jagged frames shredding the wasteland. My own blood looked dark, like tar, and I spat some out as I stood. I shivered from the snow that had burrowed into my sleeves, and shook the ice from my boots. I noticed a hole in my coat near the shoulder. The bullet had just grazed me, nothing serious; I’d been numbed so much I barely felt it. Grabbing the discarded rifle lain out in the snow, I marched over to the hare.

Its eyes were a soft pink, though they looked distant beneath a milky cloud. It was barely alive, a few raspy breaths moving that tiny frame. I raised the gun and took aim. I could see those tender eyes pleading with me, begging me for solace. I imagined them closing as I fired, asleep in eternity.

My steps through the woods were steady and even. I slung my rifle over my back, carrying the weight on broad shoulders. My gaze lay fixed ahead: confident, determined. They didn’t look back on the field or the rabbit, as I gave away such childish things. I focused then on at the trail before me which wound its way through the snowy woods.

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**Emily Loftis**

**Nativity Love Song**

Skinbag of bones
at a backchurch graveyard,
where we drove to
fuck, while bruised December
sits low, slips past us and
swallowed by the St. Clair river,
the month chewed up and spat out
in great peninsulas of ice floe on the water.

Your car’s the only one on Vine Street
parked towards the back on a cemetery’s lawn.
A church sign next to my window, reads,
LIVE! YOU ARE GOD’S CHILDREN
over Trinity’s Christmas nativity
as though hushholding
still
it’s nightly creatures
like crude moonbaby dreams,
dim in the light of plastic eyes
Mother, Joseph, and Child
awake in the snow.

They are quiet.
My lashes are fluttering over your eyelids,
finding the spoon-dip in your clavicle
moving like
tish, tish, tish,
you’re supposed to hold your breath in graveyards,
I don’t
And you think it feels little earthquakes.
for how it rustles the uneven sprouts of hair
curling at the back of your neck because
your hair’s always cut short,  
as though defiant of your breasts  
as though you are Adam rather than Eve.

I think that it’s beautiful,  
My lips open against the skin  
under your colic,  
my mind open to  
drumbeat-dreams of shaved heads.  
Dreams of naked scalps,  
the curve of bone and then the knot  
at the base of the skull, white like an onion  
at the top of the  
nap of the  
neck.  
the skin underneath your hair  
Exposed,  
As if it could mean something,  
could help me uncover you,  
find you and enter the garden,  
as if our reprise  
ever happened.

As if I can soothe the spaces  
between our limbs contorting in your car;  
the spaces between death sitting under the tread of your tires  
and life in your backseat.

You say you want to create something which will never create someone  
who will die,  
be another someone to bury underneath stone  
in Trinity’s graveyard  
dead men and women with their hair still growing in their coffins  
growing up even above ground, knotted  
in the damp earth  
rotting under the snow

you say this and reach towards me  
ribbons of muscle  
glowing from the tenuous bow  
of the nativity figures’ faint light  
caste over bodies clasped and buoyant,  
coarse over the sinews

and  
You are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
now

And it is only then, as  
it is finished,  
when you wipe your thumb  
against my passenger window,  
that I see new  
through the fogged glass;  
see the tombstones, fixed faces of mother, father, and son,  
their eclipsed battery forms,  
their plastic eyes  
now pooling light  
upon our Eden-fallen  
tangles,

and next to my window, I  
read new the church sign’s message  
rupturing dark  
against all the white  
of snow,  
of skin, and your  
Celica.

Black lettering which once was  
LIVE! YOU ARE GOD’S CHILDREN  
has been rearranged, so that when I read  
GOD EVIL CHILDREN YOU ARE!  
I think that it’s true,  
oh God, I think that it’s true and want to cry or maybe  
pray or
your hair’s always cut short,  
as though defiant of your breasts  
as though you are Adam rather than Eve.

I think that it’s beautiful,  
My lips open against the skin  
under your colic,  
my mind open to  
drumbeat-dreams of shaved heads.  
Dreams of naked scalps,  
the curve of bone and then the knot  
at the base of the skull, white like an onion  
at the top of the  
nap of the  
neck.  
the skin underneath your hair  
Exposed,  
As if it could mean something,  
could help me uncover you,  
find you and enter the garden,  
as if our reprise  
ever happened.

As if I can soothe the spaces  
between our limbs contorting in your car;  
the spaces between death sitting under the tread of your tires  
and life in your backseat.

You say you want to create something which will never create someone  
who will die,  
be another someone to bury underneath stone  
in Trinity’s graveyard  
dead men and women with their hair still growing in their coffins  
growing up even above ground, knotted  
in the damp earth  
rotting under the snow

You say this and reach towards me  
ribbons of muscle  
glowing from the tenuous bow  
of the nativity figures’ faint light  
caste over bodies clasped and buoyant,  
course over the sinews of your body  
on top of my body,  
bold as brutality.  

and  
You are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
you are reborn  
now

And it is only then, as  
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that I see new  
through the fogged glass;  
see the tombstones, fixed faces of mother, father, and son,  
their eclipsed battery forms,  
coils of plastic eyes  
now pooling light  
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and next to my window, I  
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GOD EVIL CHILDREN YOU ARE!  
I think that it’s true,  
oh God, I think that it’s true and want to cry or maybe  
pray or
laugh
and instead,
grab my winter coat
from the backseat
tucking you in it

as though to cover you,
wrap you
as in swaddling clothes.

The lights of the
nativi ty scene flickering up
as dusk trails around us,
baby Jesus and his blind
irises open under the black script,
his white scalp peeled
like a moon