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Culture Shock

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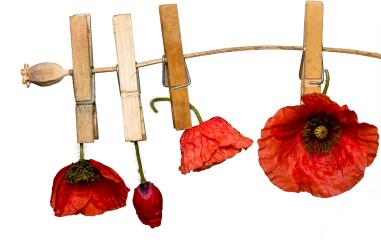
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CULTURE SHOCK

Abby Smoker



friend, your AC gives me nosebleeds. you and your house, both windows-closed types who can't sleep well at night if your habitat isn't cold and dry. you and your coat-rack encouraging me to leave my sweater by your door to put on when i come in. you, my friend, who is invited! come visit me and my house, sometime watch me with eyes wide open like my windows, while i gather crates of the humid air and wash it over every organ; the mugginess is smothering but at least, i say, at least i'm not bones left out to dry. come sit on my couches, leave your coat on the doorstep, and let my kitchen be your shawl. for you'll find, dear friend, that as for me and my house, our insides are squishy and warm. and with you, they turn to memory foam.

each one of your footprints sinks through the floor, becomes electrical impulses traveling to my foundation, and ricochet back in this form, this poem, held outstretched to you, saying please do not leave this house so soon please do not slap your thighs and announce, with that mid-Western sound, "welp..." please tell your ride "take all the time you need" when they text they've stopped for gas please do not assume the lack of air-conditioning means i don't want you instead, please take this environment as a sign that you can never be messier than me you are welcome here. you are welcome here. friend, i know you may not like the sight of my guts puddling on the floor you may not feel comfortable with my invitation to tumble your own skeleton's dust and stale hollow bones into their mix, but i promise i will keep them safe, revitalize them with blood pulled from our chests and held out in my open palms, blood which is a far better color than that which only drips, offhandedly, from my nose (and stains your pristine living room carpet).