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Culture Shock

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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).