

The Complicated Thing

We found it in the junk drawer. I held it to the light, admiring the precision. You tapped your phone and jotted down numbers while it lay outstretched on the opposite side of the table. I touched its scabbed muzzle. It grunted. In the other room, you buried your face in its soft torso. The sun cut a line across its belly. We stuffed it in a latex suit and controlled its breathing with an intricate series of tubes. We wedged its head between wheel and concrete then slowly rocked back and forth in the front seat. I took my heel to it. I let it starve over a weekend. You slapped it on the cutting board and chopped off the fat. The oil sizzled so loudly I couldn't hear what you said. It shuffled across the tile, toenails clicking out of sync with its wheezing. We locked it in a freezer and left it for the city. We were very sad. Our faces soaked in the TV light. I wondered what weapons it had pulled from its pockets—we all knew the statistics, knew someone. You palmed my face. It tore down the alley as if a storm were in tow, barking its lungs out, showing its brains to anyone who looked. You saw a shadow followed by another shadow trot through the neighborhood. We raised our hands when it approached. We said we had no cash. I barely recognized it—standing far off, teetering on the curb, in a sweatshirt. You nodded; I nodded. You ran up to greet it. You asked it inside, gave it the garden shed to sleep in. It raised its head like a dark plume over the city.

