

A Love Letter to Flesh and Bone

by Victoria Bird

It is a betrayal, spooling your arm out like cotton. Revealing, in the papery crook of it, a fretwork of purpled capillaries and a tube of blue the size of a three-amp fuse.

“It’s a good vein,” you say.

“I’ll be the judge of that.” She taps it with a forefinger, a warning percussion.

There is a second betrayal in handing it over to the needle’s hooked, stinging fang.

Blood poppies bloom and smudge their petals on your flesh and guilt gushes through you, for you. So many years, separated from this body, that you apologize to it as you would a table leg, then laugh.

The width of your outstretched arm at the elbow is ungainly. It holds too much power, too little sway. It is – with the span of your shoulders, the cowries of your ribs beneath the underwire – too much.

She daubs the wound with cotton wool, applies pressure, motions for you to take the helm. Your fingertips prickle.

You’ve been searching for a way to shrink. Bow your shoulders to the arrow of your spine, begin a curlicue in your back that will lower your gaze to the ground in the

emblem of a hundred apologies. Cast your head forward on your neck in the near miss of a hundred held doorways.

You re-draw your every line but never see the sketch of you.

But this body is ancient, trudging, relentless. When you drank too much, it broke down the poison, brick by brick. When you cleaved it open to release the pain, it knitted you a silver lining. It has formed the tiny love of your life from jelly and dust.

Like a mother, it has gathered you up, made amends, soldiered on. Your mind is the child, scattered in the wind.

She returns for the back of your arm, a hammock of pimpled chicken flesh. But this time you are ready and, "Enough," you say.

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Short bio:

Victoria Bird studied literature at the University of Cambridge in the UK and now lives in Cambridge with her family. She is currently editing her debut novel on the subject of infidelity. You can find her at <http://www.victoriabird.net> or on Twitter [@VNBird](https://twitter.com/VNBird).

