

YOUR FINGERS BURN RADIOACTIVE DIGGING INTO  
THE SOFT FLESH OF MY SOLE AND SLIP BLOODY OVER  
WHERE YOU'RE HOLDING MY POOR WOUNDED FOOT  
UP AT THE ANKLE

i don't realise it until it's too late and now i have glass in my foot. there's smashed bottles down the end of the dock and now my blood is oozing pulsing not-quite-spurting but getting there out the bottom of the wood boards and i can just about hear it drip into the lake over the sound of my heaving breaths. i'm stuck there a frozen deer in headlights at the end of the dock as my body tells me that something's terribly wrong that i'm going to die. the glass twists in my foot as i turn back to the shore and i cry out like a bunny stuck in a trap an awful noise and you come running from where you were helping unload your family's car up at the house. you're a wise hare and have your shoes on but you're careful anyway there's no sense in everyone mangling themselves trying to squirm out of the snare. I'm gasping panicking by the time you get there i havn't even thought of hopping on one foot the pain is too distracting i cant look down at it but i'm imagining the top of one of the shards slowly worming its way up through the top of my foot splitting through it with a horrible goopy horror flick *snick*. hey hey hey you're o.k. its all good man maybe you wanna get up off this foot bud? yeah lets get you back away from this a bit and we can sit down huh. I can hear you talking but it doesn't seem like it's to me but i move when you move me all i can feel is the burning splitting jesus-on-the-cross pain in my foot and where i'm holding grasping the fleshy bit of your shoulder for dear life as we lower to the ground i don't even have the presence of mind to apologise for it but you've probably already forgiven me so its alright. the feeling of your hand against my foot is insane it makes me gasp and go very still but you keep going gently brushing away the little bits before grabbing the big piece between your thumb and index finger and beginning to work it out. You wiggle it a bit but it slips further in and i can feel the top of the piece between my bones stretching out the skin of the top of my foot just a little brushing it with three hundred thousand sparks from the inside burning a channel between my veins and tendons but i can't look down to see so i look out over the end

of the dock to the thick red puddle where it'd happened and i listen to the little waves under the dock the ugly bloodthirsty fish make as they get a taste for me. it takes a second it takes three hours it takes lightyears for you to get the fucking thing out. with each slice of progress more of me pours out onto the deck in another puddle but you can't staunch that just yet so you prop my foot up between your crossed legs and i drip red all over your calves and between your thighs and it trickles down my leg past the dip of the back of my knee and hot down the back of my thigh. i'm pretty sure there are crescent nail marks in the soft wood decking where i was holding on holding my tongue trying to breathe. suddenly with a disgusting sucking noise the inside of my foot becomes so cold and you make a pleased noise fingers tightening around my ankle before setting me down against your calves. when you hold up the shard it's barely the size of the meaty bit of your thumb and glows so prettily red in the sun. when you rip your shirt overhead for a makeshift bandage to stop my now sluggish blood i feel like you just put the shard right back in with how hot i feel again.

I THINK ABOUT THE FEELING OF YOUR FRONT  
AGAINST MY BACK AND YOUR HANDS ON MY GUN  
EVERY TIME I DO ANYTHING WITH ANYONE IN MY BED  
AT HOME

the deer hide always reminds me of if a little pillbox emplacement. with every shot i am envisaging myself mowing down troops trying to invade my beach but the deer do not care to indulge my little fantasy and scramble away back to their troopships each time i miss. our shared cigarette doesn't help me shake this idea and the way you grind it out under your boot makes me want to snap to attention and salute. but i'm not a good enough shot for deerhunting where you've gotta get it right exactly the first time or your dinner will run away and you'll end the long day of sitting in your pillbox much hungrier than you started but maybe the army doesn't mind so much so long as you point the thing in the right direction. maybe i should have been visualising being a sniper but i didn't and as a kid it never mattered much cause everyone else would make up for my lack but this summer its just us up here. you say you're just doing this so we don't have to walk of shame our way out of the forest tonight and i might be reading into it but your hands are soft around mine and you whisper right into my ear as we line up the sights on the beautiful big brown doe eyes of this deer that i need to slow my heart rate so i can squeeze the trigger between beats to be as accurate as possible but that feels almost impossible right now mine is hammering away incredibly fast and it doesn't go any slower when you put your hand on my stomach and breathe deeply right up against me but i copy your breaths and squeeze when you tell me to. the sound of the shot is secondary to the way the deer's eye explodes in my sights and the thing drops like a lump. you crow and ruffle my hair, already moving to leave our pillbox. dressing the carcass i am hit with deja vu of you digging into my foot for glass. i'm elbow deep in warm meat and we make eye contact and i clutch at its flesh too tight something bursts and my hands are covered in pretty red blood and you tell me its alright they're delicate like that sometimes and you touch my hands all gentle like and slip the knife between my fingers like a promise and hold my hand just like that

and draw a line along its flesh with my other, leaving a smear of red where i can follow along. the knife goes in so easy that i gasp and go a little rigid but your hand presses into mine and we keep going and the knife cuts and cuts and once it's done i feel like i could run a mile, a hundred miles. i resist the urge to rip the pelt from your hands where you're bundling it away i resist the urge to put it over my own back and run through the forest lose my gun lose my shoes just me and i'm an animal and i can kill kill kill and its all alright cause i know you'll tell me i did a good job especially for my first time and pet me on the head and hold me close and feed me and let me sleep in your bed and love me simple. but i don't take it from you and everything gets packed away and my urge to run gets folded back down into my guts somewhere it can't be squished by reality like i did to the deer but i'm still following behind you all the way home resisting the urge to nip at your heels. if i'm a dog you've got me well trained i know that i won't be let into the house covered in blood so i jump in the lake as soon as i can, shaking my hair out as i jog back up the shore, eager eager eager to sit in the kitchen and watch you make dinner.

THE REFLECTION OF THE FIRE IN YOUR EYES IS TOO  
MUCH OF A CLICHE TO EVEN THINK ABOUT SO I STARE  
AT YOUR MOUTH AND HOPE YOU'RE TOO BUSY  
WATCHING THE FLAMES TO NOTICE

my heart's jumping in time with the bonfire's crackles. we're sitting on the same log and i wouldn't really call it a proper log its too short but i went so red in the face when you said i could sit in your lap that you probably felt bad and scooped over so now i'm sitting right up against you half falling off this so-called log. there's other people around there's always other people around but they're not the guy i only get to see once a year why would i bother with them tonight when you're right here burning like your own little bonfire right up against me. you're like a movie dead wife in my memory a supercut of laughter and refracting light that plays at poignant moments despite you never appearing in the rest of the film. i know i'm staring, but i'm not terribly sorry about it because i've probably had one too many and perhaps not enough to eat for dinner. i'm adding new clips to my self soothing supercut that i'll wear the edges smooth of by this time next year. the way your adam's apple bobs as you throw back the last of your beer the dip of your wrist as you lazily dangle the bottle between your fingers unbothered to get up for another quite just yet the jaunty angle of your cowboy hips as you finally walk away around the fire to the barbecue and everything is to get me another venison burger and yourself a new bottle. you're the son of a friend of my mother's brother's best mate's cousin-inlaws but i wish you were something different, something i had access to year-round. all of my thoughts about you are viciously selfish and they always have been since i was seven and met you for the first time right here at this lake. it's a terrible shame to only see you once a year but i can't even conceive of asking for your phone number for all i know you don't exist outside of this safe bubble of firelight your mother brags about how well you're doing in your apprenticeship but for all i know she doesn't exist outside of here either and she barely exists to me here either outside of you. asking you for that asking you for anything would shatter the illusion despite whether you rejected me or not. it would never quite be the same so i don't and i work on memorising the shade of orange flame that flicks in your eyes and start wishing it was next year already.