

The Best of It

By: Maria Picone

Once, in a broken home, I stumbled over the cut glass and ruined furniture, claiming to my family that I got robbed. The bruises never showed through my favorite peach cardigan, a shield of radiance I deployed to dazzle the world. I blamed the business trip you never took instead of the divorce I should have taken.

A long caesura fell, and you came back *changed*, you swore.

I know how to deflate a gambler's fallacy, but not, I fear, to alter the fixed nature of my Taurian heart. You took me to your favorite restaurant and confessed over the crème brulee that you wanted to start a family. I licked the round end of the spoon and watched us both flinch. When I confessed to Alyssa that you 'had a slight temper,' I hugged the sweater's rippling folds to my chest. Our secret bled inside my uterus, dripping its lies across our reupholstered couch.

The last time, I bought four new sweaters, and I denounced the Florida air conditioning as 'an epidemic.' Peach, despite its neutral heart, didn't always match my shoes. The routine violence of suburban fucking rounded my stomach and turned my wardrobe red and white. Alyssa smiled and bought an engraved silver spoon for the occasion: your initials entwined with mine. To remember.

In the shards and tears and stems of Valentine's Day carnations, I found my most honest self. My heart thudded in a way prenatal spin class never perpetrated. As I stood to shovel the corpses of our tranquility into the hall, I reveled in the silent absence of what I had always made.

