

SINISTAR

By spring, I was sort-of reassembled. Through my broken jaw, all I could say was, “I hunger.” It felt right, mistaking simplicity for depth. “I hunger,” I told my friends, and they sent me to the Chat Noir for coffee and dessert crepes. “I hunger,” I proclaimed from the top of Saylorville Dam, and the pelicans in the reservoir—pelicans in Iowa in April, how odd—guffawed with their full pouches. I ate the wind in South Dakota and it was dusty, all aces and eights. I said the hills at Buffalo Pound Provincial Park looked like buttered rolls. I was moving illogically quickly.

In August, I spat in Lake Winnebago. “Beware, I live,” I sneered at the moorings. “Beware. I live,” I called to the gulls. That was my real motto. I wanted to bleed it onto love letters, stitch it onto pillows, etch it into paperweights that would sit pointlessly on my papers, scrimshaw it onto her bones. “Beware, I live,” I told you, as if it was the first half of an insidious palindrome: *Beware, I live; evil I, era web.*

ASTROSMASH

The second time I got drunk was during a certain uneven summer. My best friend was dating my childhood best friend. My girlfriend stayed in Des Moines, alternating bikinis and floods. I kept dreaming about Montana until it felt like glaciers gouged my eyes. There was a road called Going-to-the-Sun, so we went to town for some pizza.

I didn’t know what good beer was then, but I was certain I’d never drink something called a Snake Bite. The second friend held my hand, holy, told me she was happy, said she’d like to get some coffee tomorrow morning. The first held a philosophy titled Thrust. The urinals seemed to vibrate. Entire horizons listed to port.

We went outside: gravel Wisconsin. “Look. The stars. Are changing colors,” I said to them, then slumped in the back seat like a bag of bullets. The cornfields green as Venus. The billboards lonely as omens. And me with my fingers for pistols, shooting the moon.