

—+ **JULIA SCHROEDER** | Love Poem

I love the crush of your lips on my lips;  
Succulent, irregular berries.  
To you I expose  
the myriad stained tiles of my heart  
a 13th century Byzantine mosaic,  
broken with passing, and silence.

I will gird my hips with morning glories and wait for you.  
In your supple embrace I mew.  
Come:  
My body is your oasis.  
Bathe your tongue in me  
and my blood will sing your patois  
through the keel of giddy years.

—† **JULIA SCHROEDER** | The Indicator Says D

We would be drunk by noon but I don't think this affected my mother's  
driving much.

Moosehead in coffee cups or Schooner lager  
and after the Schooner then another one,  
all without rushing.

Then some Sunchips  
to get the beer taste out of our mouths  
and some beer to get the Sunchips taste out of our mouths.

Listening to the CBC's local broadcasts we learn about the parts of the Atlantic  
we can't see from the highway.

Clarence P. Valentine's antique milk can collection  
Halloween parties from Antigonish to Sydney,  
words to a song called "Sittin' in the Kitchen Is My Favourite Thing to Do."  
When Peter Gzowski saves us from such quaintness  
my mother says, "I should take him out for coffee."

Flat table of Gros Morne angled up from the bottom of the ocean.  
Lichen and edelweiss over a trillion trilobites.  
Puffballs, a bird nest of twigs and feathers,  
an oyster shell from Malpeque, maps.  
Maybe we should finish what's left of the Quebec microbreweries.  
Because This Is Newfoundland, we should be drinking local.

Lunch at the farmer's market—we mouse along,  
eating samples of grainy bread, garlic dip and homemade cheese.  
The earnest cooks lean at us with farmer-lean faces and tell us  
"it's organic" and we say we like it,  
meaning their freckles. Old women with braids.  
Homemade sausage and sauerkraut, smoked eel.  
Coffee?

But back in the van there's only beer  
and I remembered to stock the fridge so it's cold, too.  
The yellow line on the left, the white on the right (check)  
and moose in the ditch digging a hole to pee in.  
Besides, coffee takes too long,  
so we pour,  
saying "way ya go boys!" like a pair of moose hunters.

She takes another picture.  
Squinting in a wool cardigan, her hips graze lupin seed pods.  
The traffic plows by, gusting the van.  
She's in the ditch—a margin of error—  
I note its slimness while she backs up, framing.  
I wonder why I have to abstract a thing like a ditch,  
and decide not to make a note.

In with a shudder, she holds her small fingers,  
saying she's lost feeling in her hands.  
She puts on the heat "2 minutes!"  
and I put Jim Kweskin's jug band in the tape deck  
because the CBC's on news again.  
I tisk because I'm warm and the heat (already) annoys me  
like the stuffed Garfield which she has along  
not because she likes Garfield but because  
it reminds her of her dad who died two years ago.

But at the same time as huffing my feet onto the dashboard,  
I feel her momentary chill, her proud thin shoulders  
and loosening skin over strong hands.  
I sing loudly to unblock my throat. And she sings too.

We should have stocked up on Black Horse.  
She cranks the gearshift so the indicator says D.  
Then it's over the Skye bridge  
and no more craft stores.  
We listen to fiddle music and I start talking  
with a terrible imitation of a Scottish brogue.

She laughs while she hits the steering wheel with her palm  
and I laugh but say “watch your driving”  
which makes her accelerate to pass an Oldsmobile.  
I yell: “fearr brrrings out the clarrity!” as my Scottish accelerates  
until we pass both the car and a train parallel with the Trans-Canada.  
We honk the horn for the loss of cabooses  
and only a crow will hear us.