

Amber Mazzie

Gin & Tonic, No Lime

“Hey,” my jacket yells at me, masculine & gruff, “are you done working?” I turn, slipping a hand in one of my coat’s many mouths. “Yeah, I was on my way out” I answer to my roommate. “Stay and watch TV with us,” His voice softens. “Thank you, I’m just hungry.” “Let me pour you a drink,” he sounds almost like my mother. He almost smells like her, but he doesn’t like beer. “No thank you, I still haven’t eaten.”

Snow heard me approach each turn. This was better than my walls. I actively tried to lose track of myself. I kept track of my neighborhood, I kept track of the expressway, I kept track of the bus stop, I kept track of the small stairs, I kept track of the driver, I kept

track of my seat, exactly in the middle . It worked until I notice the woman sitting next to me. She smelled like my grandma. I thought about her mother's pot roast and potato dumplings. I thought about my great grandmother's handwriting on index cards in the recipe box next to the fridge. I thought about the fridge. I thought about which kind of beer I would order. I thought about the empty spaces where food should have been. I thought about my mom. My dad doesn't like potato dumplings.

A man talking on his phone walked in and stood at the front. He sounded like my college boyfriend. The bus moved slowly away from the stop. I tried to keep track of how slow each street was. I watched through the front window. I watched the man's back sway with subtle but sudden curves. Sometimes, if a sway was sudden enough, he would raise his voice a little. Sometimes, if it was subtle enough, he would forget to lower it again.

My empty stomach thought of itself. Has my grandmother always smelled like pot roast? I wanted a double whiskey ginger ale. I

turned and looked straight ahead of me. I was just sudden enough to sway into my grandma. For a second, the night looked like the hallway in my parents' house. I could taste potato dumplings.

“You don't get it, you're missing my entire point,” I wondered if my dad was mad about work or my mom. “I'm not going to do shit with it until Monday.” The man from the front walked toward me

now. He sat down and spread his legs wide. He smelled like a fraternity basement. I pressed my arm into my grandmother's. I looked back and shut my bedroom door. I felt a man's warm thigh pressed into mine. I tried to tell him I didn't want his thigh up against mine.

Don't make me sound like a goddamn rapist.

I want a gin & tonic, no lime.

I tried to check what stop was next but I couldn't read. I looked out the front window. Everything outside was familiar. Everything

inside was very familiar. The windows were steaming, I think the potato dumplings boiled over. I want three gin & tonics. I don't want any limes. The bus slowed for a stop, it didn't matter which, and I held my breath waiting for my thigh to be mine again. The bus made a slight, sudden, subtle jolt as it halted. My thighs felt weightless. The man was getting off at this stop. I decided to stay. I tried to let out a breath without making any noise.

My slightly too sudden sigh shoved the bus 20 feet. The man smacked his face against the open doors and shattered his phone. I grabbed my grandmother's hand. The bus driver stormed toward me and I buried my head into my grandmother's shoulder. Suddenly the bus was full of men. Screams flooded the back seats and gushed out of the front door. I lifted my head and the hallway was soaked in tears. I saw my mother on the phone.

Red and blue lights surrounded the men. I thought they were going to grab me. I thought they were going to slap me. I thought they were going to yell at my mom. I tried to stop crying so they

wouldn't yell at me. My grandma put her arm around me and led me out to my mom. They both held me. They led me to the back of the hallway. It smelled like limes. My brother was passed out, drunk. He crashed the bus into his bedroom.