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Poetry by Jennifer Martelli



The Woman Who Visited Her Cornfield

for Cindy Veach

I lay in bed too long into the morning, scrolling my phone
to find out who squeezed the last bit of joy into the jelly-jar tumbler,
the one with cartoons frosted all over it. One time, prone, I dropped
my phone right onto my mouth, thought I chipped a tooth, a front one,
one of my fangs. My teeth are still good, hard and whole, but my jaw
and its hinges are growing tired, letting loose the roots. My friend texted
an article about a python who ate a woman whole in a cornfield. At night,
her family called her name, searched row after row, and found her shoes,
her flashlight, her machete: things a snake wouldn't need to take. They found
the snake sleeping and lidless, the shape of a humped woman halfway
down its length: the digestive juices had not begun their long work
of eating at her soft parts. They slit the snake, mouth to tail, the white
Jacob's ladder belly opened in a single line, and the woman fell out:

complete and suffocated as a stillbirth.



One Year After My Friend Posted a Photo of Jean-Léon Gérôme's *The Bacchante: Head of a Woman With the Horns of a Ram*

a woman crawls through a hole behind her medicine cabinet,

finds an unused apartment: walls skimmed smooth,

doors hung, shelves for cups, hooks to hang

spider plants and lunaria in macramé slings

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knotted with undyed cotton yarn. She could put a baby
grand piano in this living room. She could have two
living rooms! She posts this discovery to her TikTok
and the video goes viral in a single day, this dream
I've had my whole life. In the dream dictionary—the one
with a creepy-eyed sun and crescent moons against
a blue nighttime sky—it says: *dreaming you've found
that hidden or secret room suggests new strengths,
new roles*. When I woke next day, I was sprouting thick horns
like a ram. They were curling back into me.

Art Information

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Jennifer Martelli is the author of *The Queen of Queens* (Bordighera Press, 2022) and *My Tarantella* (Bordighera Press, 2018), which was awarded an Honorable Mention from the Italian-American Studies Association, selected as a 2019 Must Read by the Massachusetts Center for the Book, and named as a Housatonic Book Awards finalist. She is also the author of *After Bird*, which won the 2016 Grey Book Press open reading award. Her work has appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Thrush*, *Cream City Review*, *Verse Daily*, *Iron Horse Review*, and elsewhere. Jennifer has twice received grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for her poetry. She is co-poetry editor for *Mom Egg Review*.

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