

Breathless by Elle Otero

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I close the door and lean into its oiled click
The grained wood leaves red lace imprints that burn
a trail down my cheek
You're just on the other side and we've said
goodnight and I realize it's been so long since I've
Laughed like that
Eaten my fill
Stepped through a held car door
Pouted at a waitress who looked at you with heat in
her eyes

I fiddle with the smooth chrome lock
Tracing my fingertips up and down the cool
gleaming plate and I realize
I've frantically crawled inside other skins,
contorting to fit myself in tight spaces
Stretching and bending
Writhing
Gasping for air
Whispering *A home away from home is still a home*

But here your red truck growls to life and headlights
flicker
Beams tumble through the white slats of wooden
blinds that can't keep the outside out
I flip the lock and step into the night air that's so
cold it bites my nose and I gasp because I am
Alive

Desirable
Divine
Will I tell you I love you tonight?

Your mouth echoes the moon's pearl glow, present
and distant at once
White teeth gleam beyond the glaring lights, perfect
and framed by your upturned lips
The tires crunch the gravel until they stop, and all I
hear is my heart in my ears, it thunders like
Pound
Pound
Silence
You cut the engine
And I lose my breath

Elle Otero is the author of short stories and poetry. Her writing has appeared in *Scheherazade* literary magazine, *The Otter Realm*, and she has several self-published works on Amazon. She lives with her family in Elkhorn, California. Learn more at www.elleotero.com.