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Landing Road

Micheal K. Jhonson

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Landing Road

I see my mother when I see road kill—when the road
blurs with steam-heat, spreads glossy through the dash
and presses—

when my eyes are
set to rest on the road, on stiff dead deer
with their smallest pieces being carried away
by well-meaning ants. Don't trouble yourself, they scurry
gone what's troubling. She had it hinted—
even back when we two, me and the he,
nestled in the red pick-up, with its clattered
sheen glinting at the trees arcing over the narrow road, we made
unease, we made that moment free of it,
despite a pattern (slow to emerge) of to do
to one is not what always is done
to the other.

The time the he reached to put his arm around me, his final limbs
weighing, carrying blood, and my face leapt forward
as I turned to see— What wanes is the freshness of the deer: was it new?
Was it there weeks? So many casualties along there,

always—
and the veiled bones of his elbow clunked against my skull,
painting a bruise difficult
to explain to my mother, later. My father,
wooden spoon in hand, seemed to have
it raised higher.

I laughed, the he glances down, the he worried as I press
a bag of frozen peas to my temple—it was a dead deer, some silly road kill,
some snack
for bugs, I turned at the wrong moment,
everything's—it was all—just—

My mother said, you know I worry about that route.
Her unbuttoned gaze rifles through me now, dead dear in eye, recalling
to me when I see deadness
she was right.

About Michael K. Johnson

Michele K. Johnson is currently a candidate for the MFA in poetry program at George Mason University, where she works in the classroom with undergraduates as a Teaching Assistant. She's also the current Assistant Editor of *So to Speak*, GMU's graduate feminist literary journal. Her work has been previously published in "The Montuckey Review," "The Ampersand Review," and "491 Magazine," and she has work forthcoming in the "Ucity Review." When she isn't writing or teaching, Michele spends her time playing with her roommate's cat.