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Vital Sign II—Temperature

Collestipher Dodge Chatto

Shellfire I am, like twenty drifters of last year in Gallup who unfurled their hands releasing the last sundries of autumn. This flurry blusters my face—flakes only melt around my mouth. Blizzard will soon part its bangs & someone in one of the passing cars will see a Fifth glister. I am Listerine—tongue stuck on metal. Broken glass flecks among gravel on the railway's bedrock. Long ago, in the hall lined with bleachers I threw the last ball into the hoop, a star. Postgame, return to my father who is face down with urine darkening his camouflage pants. Country music twangs complaints from the radio beside my mother hunched over a cold cup of coffee creamed with Bailey's. Lines in her face converge into one crease, streamlines a rivulet of white surrender—diamond ring unreachable in burning gasoline. *One day you'll leave all of this behind*, mother says. I sit on the rail, & a horn blares far to my right. I fold, pack, snap, dust, lock my home: backpack full of canned Vienna sausages, beef, & fruit cocktails; child size Broncos jersey, blanket reeking of lard & apple vinegar, American Spirits boxing one cigarette, & a half-empty Svedka taped inside a plastic bag.

COLLESTIPHER DODGE CHATTO is Diné from Pine Hill, located on the Ramah Diné Reservation in western New Mexico. His poems have appeared in *Tribal College Journal*, *Plume*, *Friendzone*, *HIV Here & Now Project*, and *The Gordian Review*. He is an MFA candidate in creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts with a focus on poetry. Recipient of an American Indian Graduate Center fellowship, he holds a BFA in creative writing from IAIA. In addition to poetry, he enjoys writing short fiction, nonfiction, and screenplays, as well as painting and drawing.

Headlights of the beast remind me of the nightmare: hiding from the beastly bellow that morphed into a serrated cry I cowered to a dumpster, lifted its lid, inside, a limb

of ocean among black plastic, coral foundling. I turned its face toward me, & let go when I see it is I. Vibration beneath my boots diverts my focus. In a fogged snow globe,

these days, my son is a Kodak photograph in my leather wallet. He used to hold my hand & asked me one day, *Where do they sleep?* I did not know. He & I gawked

one more time at the woman rummaging through stuff in a mart cart. His passing was a metal freight blaring by, disheveling crinkled sunflowers as I gulped hard. I

promised myself I never again miss my ride nor leave a loved one without a telephone. This time, this time I toss my home to the side, out of the way, so one stray mutt like me

will find some survival in them. I lay horizontal on the vertical rails, resting my nape on one rail, look up at the patch of baby blue in hoar sky. Snow no longer melts beneath

my cotton & polyester. Close my eyes, shut out the alarm, sparks spit as metal wheels screech to a long skid, to a spine splitting, to a scissor snipping the coral cord.

Monstrous Slayer

tongue of cactus icepicks the hot face
fists to faces dislevel flat Earth
he slides contusions beneath her skin
lymph nodes heavy against breasts
heavy as a scaffold hangs a heavy hood
yowls blotch the white wife beater brown

hard jerk
to the left the head
a snap of

sockets

sandblast bone to milk powder biceps bridge over flat stone
wrench twins by their feet
undress them like a sheep butchering

among tortoises shell down in sludge
radio lucent turtles
her head gems
an anvil
shallow river beds the torso

her rectum left his penis incarnadined
leaking green slime from the slit

*have you seen a horn toad cry
a grasshopper vomit
a stink bug bend over?*

he trowels

spines of cottage cheese umbilical
intestines hen gizzards squid cups bowling eyes
dumps them into
a colossal sardine can
for the demiurge to hammer
aluminum swift spark of stars

her pelagic screech pulls back a tab of cloud
releases the guillotine blade
his shoulders peel apart at the collar
crumples on earthy facing ends