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To Get There, She Had to Kill a Cow

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

TO GET THERE, SHE HAD TO KILL A COW

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Lissa Batista

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Lissa Batista, and entitled *To Get There, She Had to Kill a Cow*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Julie Marie Wade

Vernon Dickinson

Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

Date of Defense: October 26, 2022.

The thesis of Lissa Batista is approved.

Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
TO GET THERE, SHE HAD TO KILL A COW

by

Lissa Batista

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

TO GET THERE, SHE HAD TO KILL A COW is a poetry collection about sexuality and motherhood. The love poems navigate through different encounters, some ironically following the pattern of romance novels. There is a tone shift when the poems begin to explore home and childhood in Brazil. It reflects how the mother has impacted the speaker's behavior growing up, and how it's a reflection of her parenting with her child.

In terms of formal gestures, she has written short poems on astrology, and prose poems on Brazil. She has written ekphrastic poems for my mother, sonnets for my brother. The poems are sexy, confessional, and raw with emotion. Inspired by Maggie Nelson, Nikki Moustaki, and Ariana Reines— women authors who stepped outside of tradition, who dared to talk about sex and unhealthy family dynamics. Overall, this collection centers on multifaceted love.

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Section 1.

Daily Horoscope

I take off my bra and let my shoulders hang up
on yesterday; the knee I banged, the chipped paint
on my left big toe from wearing new sneakers.

Face the full length mirror, watch my olive skin,
moisturized and soft of young age, bloom in red
blotches from my heaving chest up my shoulders,
my neck, my cheeks; what would they see
if feelings left me like raindrops from heavy clouds,
the tears driving over my body, the hives buzzing
under my skin in rose-reds? I smile wide
enough to see my back molars.

A japanese proverb says your third face, you don't show
anyone, that's your truest self—
What is so scary about this truth?

Soap Opera Slip

It's you; towering in tight slacks, hair in a ponytail, a curl caresses your forehead because we know how much you need to be touched.

It's you; looking through my phone, in my notes, checking my purse for clues about the new person. I watch in a red dress, drinking red—

whining about your coworker, Megan, the one who lives in Canada, who texted you about a song that reminded her of you. Yet, you're mad

because I'm mad. The camera close-ups on my tears— my face villainous-fat, eyebrows furrowed, hair frizzed and lips overlined.

Red is the blood in my ears when I find you and Megan in the lobby, red is the handprint on your face when I run after you. Red are the claws

down her back, red are the cop car lights outside, red are my flushed cheeks in an overnight jail, red is the fire in my underwear when I notice the cop

on duty was my high school boyfriend who hadn't changed except for the uniform shirt strangling his biceps, his radio cinched to his chest,

the wire brushing his nipple. Red was his mouth when I went in for a kiss,
red was my ass when he smacked it so hard, another cop called for backup.

He pressed me against the wall, his front to my back, hands sprawled,
legs wide, he dared me to move a step. I could feel him through his pants—

I lift my cheek from against the wall and go for a lick to his lips, a growl
zippered between his teeth, but before I fuck to forget about you and Megan

you bail me out. No ponytail. Wrinkled-white long sleeve. Time to go home.

It's you: a cigarette sitting on a smirk, windows down, wild hair, hand on my thigh.

My Brother, the Moon

We crawled out of the booth towards the storefront, facing the streets of downtown Miami, heading towards the green candy light emanating from the window. You held onto the green neon tube, outlining the display window in curves over the corners. Both your hands gripped tightly to the neon, a jump rope, up and down. Up and down. Flashes from that day: your Mickey Mouse shoes, red and blue laces, your white bib, the drool from your bottom lip, your marshmallow baby body, brazilian music —*pagode*— in the background. You break the tube, a jagged edge after slamming it down on the floor. Green neon sparks, made of glass. You nunchucked them, one in each hand, up and down. Our father noticed but he didn't startle, he motioned to mother, whispered over her shoulder, not overreacting. Mother yelled in tempo with the repinique drum and you turned to her. Arms still raised. A neon red cut smiled across your right cheek. You weren't a crier, but that day, mother cried enough for the both of us. Today, the scar, a moon; waxing underneath a trimmed beard. At night, the scar glows neon.

Wild parakeets

horizon in September—

a graze of green streaks.