

Poetry  
Ryan Gruenewald

Falling Action

A tongue scalded by its first taste of coffee. The shade her favorite sweater used to be but redder, deeper, richer, what chocolate is to brown or spinach to green, or how her eyes can make him so unsure. He paces the rows feeling the folds of the husks and the strands that cling tightly to each other. He withdraws before the desire to pick becomes too much.

He scrapes the garden from his boots on the raised edges of the sidewalk and walks into her kitchen with deep mud in his tread and sits with eyes like plates of fresh chicken and beans and whatever's still boiling on her stove. The cannas are blooming redder than ever, he says.

The earth dries—falls as the deep wrinkles of his rubber soles flex open—falls on the orange linoleum he laid five years ago, wearing through now—falls in a shower of pale grey clumps and powder.

When the rain stops tomorrow he will haunt the field again. He will grip and pull the largest, fullest ears. Slip his fingers inside. Rip open the husks. Expose the pale yellowness. She will be waiting for him in the kitchen, making neat piles with the corn broom, steam collecting on her sallow skin.