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In This Skin

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Cover Page Footnote

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COURTNEY FLEMING

IN THIS SKIN

You had the opportunity
to try me on for size
 but I was too big—
not in the flesh
creamy, smooth, sensual—
 but in the heart
 every beat intense
building, burning away,
with red hot flames and oxygen,
the ring of manure
around the core—
the cage around
the heart – fireproof
around the source of the fire
flames too big for your
muscle to understand
to embrace, to calm, to own.
I will not be owned
 by the discomfort of trying
 to survive trapped in this skin.
I will not be owned
 by what I am not—
 a pretty-well-put-together-girl.
Somewhere inside
you have burrowed
but not as oil to fuel my desire
but as an artifact
 of what I will never be
 and why I will never
 matter to you or to your kind.
I accept this proposal,
gracefully, to laugh at your
imperfections as you so
subtly highlight my own
 over cocktails
 in a smoky bar
 on the north side
and in this foreign abode
 a haven from the rest of
 existence
 a haven in a bottle
 a bottle in a foxhole,
you laugh at me
The irony is this:
 some morning you will
wake in an empty bed in a cold room
with only cold metal to hold
you wondering when life passed you
by,
 but I can tell you that
the moment is now
 and it's passing
with every breath
 every wrong move
 every beat
of your dull heart.