

ISSUE 10

IMPOSSIBLE ARCHETYPE

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Leaving the Shire **Jes Battis**

Your dog's fur collects
in the empty crate
along with my cat's ghost
and autumn
as we slip
our separate coordinates.

The hotel knows itself:
haunted blue carpets,
decaying glamor. I step
from the shower
and you ask where I went
like the bathroom is a wormhole.

In the famous bookstore
I sneak a glance at
your spine: a novel
where boys kiss on prom night
and no one's scared
no one's dead
the waffle house keeps them all
under its heat lamp,
queer goslings.

Fireworks crackle
along the dark Willamette
green waves
breaking over us. I'm a gob-
smacked hobbit, veiled
in artificial light, your hand
nervous in mine. Candy-floss
tall as French wigs
webbing us together.

We nearly trip
over fossilized tram lines,
laughing. We push
the beds together
and I glance at the door
between rooms:
sealed Narnian chamber
still breathing.

You undress
my American side:
Jersey roots, my grandfather's
stern neurotype, my dad
stoned and listening to *Steely Dan*
in Kendall Park.

I'm too careful. I never know
if you're really here. You slide
down your boxers, and smirk.
The familiar puzzle
in my hand, the fit of us.

In the morning you hunt Pokémon
while I check in early
for this ten-year ache—
a/c raising goose flesh
my nose in your crook
trying to save
that clean cat smell.