

JENNIFER CLARK

Not a fast runner, I consider other ways to escape this relationship

I play dead, like a 'possum. In the den we have built, I wait on the mossy couch for you to grow bored. I lie on my side, eyes open, lips parted, teeth bared. I feign no interest in the lamp you throw across the room. When darkness crashes, I hear you swallow, can even sense your prehensile mind wrapping itself around another beer. It is good you are too preoccupied to grasp my fear.

Possums are smarter than you think. Trapped in a maze, they find their way out better than rats.

Hours, or maybe minutes, go by. You lean in, breath prickling the pink of my nose. When you poke, I will not flinch.

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The dead don't fall asleep but I do, and dream I'm a dragonfly nymph. Wingless, I survive underwater for six years. When the weather is right, I crawl up a cattail, shed my skin, and fly towards the light.

When I wake, it occurs to me: I could shamble out the door.

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I stay on the couch and these facts keep me up at night:
Once a dragonfly becomes fully dragonfly, it lives only two months.
In captivity, a possum lives up to eight years. In the wild, two.

As you chase your tail, I pretend to be blind to the rubble of us.
I consider kangaroo. Like possum, the raisin-sized embryo scales rugged terrain to reach the pocket; will one day emerge, born again.

If only I'd been born a bandicoot. I'd slide on the skin of gravity
and tuck myself into a backwards-facing pouch, shielded from debris
you fling my way.

To go, though, against gravity seems the honorable thing to do.
I blink my eyes, stretch opposable thumbs, and rise.
I am a seed in search of a pouch.