

Transubstantiation

By Olivia Vanderwal

The spaghetti you made three days ago is sitting in a glass container on the top shelf of the fridge. I stand there and look at it for a while, close and open the fridge door again, then take the container out and set it on the counter. I can't bring myself to grab one set of utensils, so I remove the lid and sit on the floor, holding the container with both hands in front of me like an offering. It feels right to bow my head, so I do, and it feels right to say a few words, so I do.

Then I pick up a spaghetti noodle and roll it gently between my index finger and thumb. The sides are forgiving, almost fleshy. I cradle the noodle against my cheek, slide it across my lips and hold it there. This is your body. I push the noodle between my teeth, chew a few times and swallow. It's soggy from sitting in the sauce all this time — I had reminded you to keep everything separate.

The red sauce fills the bottom inch of the container. Holding it closer to my face, I breathe in stale tomato, basil, and salt. I dip a finger into the sauce and draw a line with it from my bottom lip, down my chin and throat, between my collar bones; it's thick and cold against my skin. This is your blood. I bring my finger to my tongue and lick off the rest. You over-salted the sauce and used too much basil, but you were never one for measuring.

The container is getting heavy, so I place it in my lap and look down. I think about the sound of your humming, the way you placed the dry noodles in the pot like they might break. I take a breath and put my whole hand into the container to grab a fistful of spaghetti, to feel the weight of the noodles in my palm. I whisper your name and shove them between my teeth, bite and swallow while my other hand reaches out for more. I do this until I'm gasping for air, until my jaw aches and my fingers are numb,

and even then, I lift the container up and use my tongue to wipe away the sauce that still clings to the sides and corners.

When there's nothing left, the container slips from my hands and hits the floor, cracking and breaking open. Glass spills across the kitchen, and I pause to look at the mess before laying down in it. There are pieces of noodles stuck to my face and chest, tomato sauce staining the collar of my shirt, a shard of glass digging into my shoulder blade. I close my eyes for a while and I can hear the rhythm of my heartbeat, feel the precise point at which the spaghetti settles into my stomach and begins to move through my intestines. The weight of it makes my body feel twice as heavy.