

Senior Division, Short Fiction

Molly Clarke, Paradise

Roadkill (an excerpt)

When she'd first started meeting up with Robert, she'd found it hard to look at Felix's face later that night, in his bed in Chancellor Park. She'd rationalized it with her friends, even mentioned it to Felix's nurse once, who told her it was only natural to "connect" with Robert, given the unknowns of Felix's recovery.

She'd hold his hand and tell him every detail of the week except for that one. She'd often resort to talking about old memories, as the consensus on brain injuries was that the older the memory, the more likely its retrieval. It helped that his eyes were closed, as she found being the keeper of his life to be an overwhelming responsibility that felt a bit like holding water in her hands.

She thought about how strange it was to share the same bank of memories as someone else. Years and years of

suppers and car rides and arguments and lazy mornings. And how these scraps and oddments of memory were uniquely shared but not identical. She realized it was much heavier carrying these memories now that they were hers alone. She found something unfaithful about revisiting them without his participation, as though she was reluctantly complicit in something underhanded. She thought about the power she now held with Felix, to handpick memories like wildflowers and present them in a beautiful bouquet, with all the insects washed off in the sink and sent twirling down the drain into blackness.