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Finishing the Basement

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Finishing the Basement

Abstract

You're so in love with me
you can't buy oranges
without them being blood
oranges. You can't see
mice without them having
burst-open stomachs...

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Finishing the Basement

by Hannah Loeb

You're so in love with me
you can't buy oranges
without them being blood
oranges. You can't see
mice without them having
bursted-open stomachs.
The spray-foam insulation,
expanded in their little
bellies, has ransacked
the center: mice are lying
astonished in the oblivious
pool of their creamsicle innards.
Today I'm having work done.
Men coming in and out
of the house through the door
we never use, the front one,
and workboots on the rugs,
and a white truck blocking
the driveway, and a rotten
pumpkin kicked headlong
(how else?) into the bushes
alights there, making space.

Seven mice, on their sides
in the livid plain of the half-
finished basement, your job
to delete them from my day,
and mine to be afraid. But
a dead mouse is not death,
although you're so in love
with me, a dead mouse isn't
death, it's bigger than death,
or bigger in death; the foam
expands to thirty times
its original size. The mouse
can't see without stretching,
the flick of its eyes is too much
for it. Men, moving the loveseat, lift
with their backs and bring to light
Cholula caps and jumbo crumbs
of moldy marble cake the swelling
rodents saw but never ate.

Hannah Loeb is a recent graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she was a Teaching-Writing Fellow and won the 2015 John C. Schupes Fellowship for Excellence in Poetry. She received her B.A. from Yale University in 2012, winning Yale's Frederick Mortimer Clapp Fellowship. She has been published in *Ninth Letter*, *Sequestrum*, and *Prodigal*. Hannah lives in Santiago, Chile where she teaches 9th and 12th grade English at Nido de Aguilas International School.