

RHYTHM by KYLE DARGAN

With a fuel tank full of testosterone,
the procreative drive wedged
like a brick against my throttle,
I break to bail from atop my lover
mid-orgasm—my basting seed
a road winding away from her waist.
I don't feel guilt, but I say *sorry*
for the wreck of me on her skin.
This maneuver is the choice of men
who want to feel but not to father.

While the terror is fresh—my body
trembling above my own source-code
pooled in her belly button—I question
how is it that I've arrived here again,
goading new life. It begins with her
profession: *I trust you*. I am aware
that I can't be trusted to time nature
so it's my gametes that arrive panicked
instead of me—so near their rallying
point, so certain to perish with mission
failed.

This dismount men consider
not contraception but, rather, a parry—
one we might not need were we honest
about our need to shame women
who do not want to mother but want
to feel. Why must she trust my hips'
reflexes in the name of pleasure,
the human pursuit? Her faith as much
a surrender to this world of choices
curated, controlled, from the daises of men.
She has hoped that my desire to blend
our bodies but not beget will protect us

both. Though if I pull back a moment
too late, only she will be altered, be *with*.

To remain is another decision she must
entrust me with, as she is woman. So many
like her must rest faith in men like me—
men whose hearts might fill with helium,
who could peer below and find nothing
tethers them to the duets they leave
within uteri, who can't even be expected
to sing *a sorry* as the music begins to swell.