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Mel Henderson

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BUT THE THING THAT UNIDID HIM

by

Mel Henderson

was the college girl's perfect brain, freed from its bony box, lying in unnatural rest on the shoulder of the highway, all slippery and pink and pristine and vulnerable as a startled fetus. He'd flipped on the flashers to pursue a silver blur around the unlit bend and now the teams were arriving so he covered her brain with an orange cone so it wouldn't be kicked or crushed as they marked, measured, photographed. Only half of her body was there and she looked almost natural, asleep in the dark, as though her unseen half simply sank into the pavement, but he had to rub at his throat to keep it open and he had to rub blue ink on paper to keep from clenching his hands while the matter-of-fact men swept up glass and burnt-out flares and gathered the last cones and declared the site clean—but when they trundled off in their white trucks no one saw that her brain was left in the gravel and the girl could not call out to them, *Wait, you forgot my brain, over there by the passing cars.* But it was found before sunrise, first by insects, then by birds, and later by people, her family who came to the site to understand what had happened, but because there is no understanding insects

