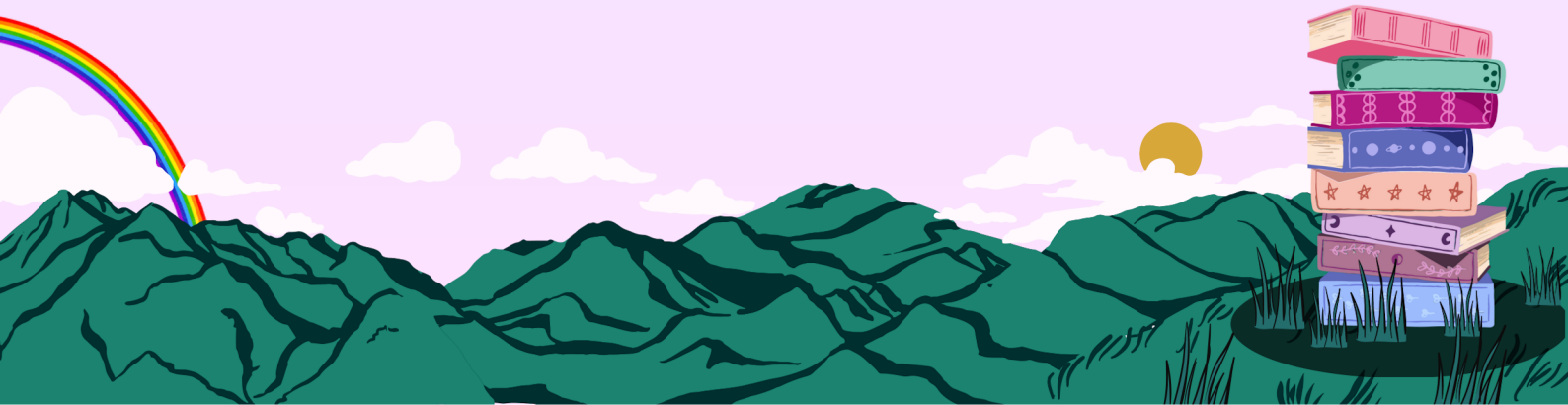


# DESIO, DESIRE, AND THE TRUTH

*Three poems by Cadence Chung*

## 1. DESIO

Easy to blame desire easy to blame it when us girls are all out there showing ourselves off easy to blame desire easy to blame it on the want the wanton of a woman they just can't help it they just want ruin they made Rome fall and it is still falling falling endlessly into the rotting love of the past the dust that ends up on the corners of our lips to lick away easy to blame desire for sneaking into dressing rooms for reaching out for a touch and finding much much more for turning bodies against bodies against bodies endless human dominoes all trying to bite the love out of each other knocking over glasses in in their haste to cut teeth together but the truth is desire is not something you talk to the mountains and rivers and flowers about your echo trailing away uselessly shouting its name like a curse into the rock-snotted dip of a stream desire is a white-cold-burning caress a stroke of the candle flame a pinprick sliding under the first sheath of skin it's not something you shout about it's something you beat down with tiny hammers into your sinew until you find it in every touch and every sleuth of hot blood that sits, waiting, in your lips



## 2. DESIRE

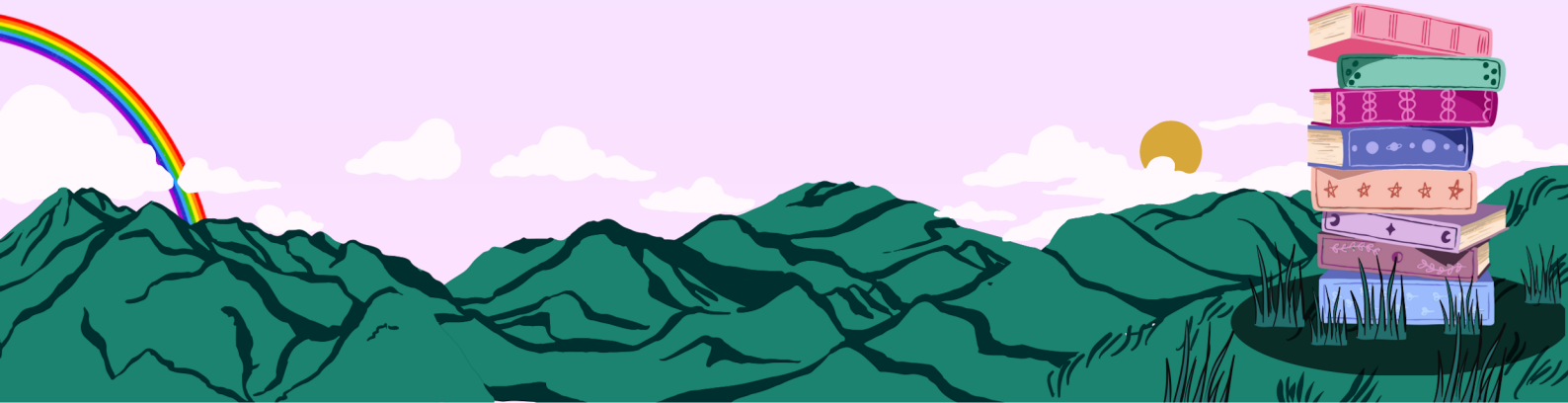
I try not to think about it, even when  
my eyeshadow is a black smear  
and I've bled clots all through my panties.

I try to focus back to the rims of glasses,  
the necklace chain draped on the book.  
Each item with its own personal boredom.

I catalogue our fluorescent-washed bodies,  
so carefully clothed. His t-shirt, compact  
around his angles. The velvet strap of her

dress slipping. And me — in that horrible  
little get-up, the polyester skirt that always  
wrinkles, the brand-new brogues, still stiff.

But I do — I do. The night is hungry. The Uber  
home is quiet. My cat, still awake, drops a  
piece of kibble at my feet. Then she eats it whole.



### 3. THE TRUTH

I've got one of those colds that sneaks in like a text to an ex-lover, and my lungs are full of salt. On Marion Street, there's an old building I'd never noticed, faux columns painted blue and white.

*There is no religion greater than the Truth,* it proclaims. I remember our church play — I think of Pontius Pilate asking what Truth was — but he was played by someone's old uncle and really it had no philosophic weight. I used to not like to write about the truth, preferring insipid fantasy where people denounced small talk and boys had auburn hair and girls were strawberry-scented accessories.

*Why bother about the real world?* I asked. But now my past escapism has turned into an incessant thirst for the click of brogue on pavement, the taste of girl in mouth, decidedly non-strawberry. I am a changed woman. I drink Metro Top 50 Wines and I'm friends with people who write poetry. My father, on many a winding night, drank vodka mixed with cordial. I remember the red-shimmer-powder allure of it. Last weekend I bought a twenty dollar cocktail. *This is it,* I deludedly think.

