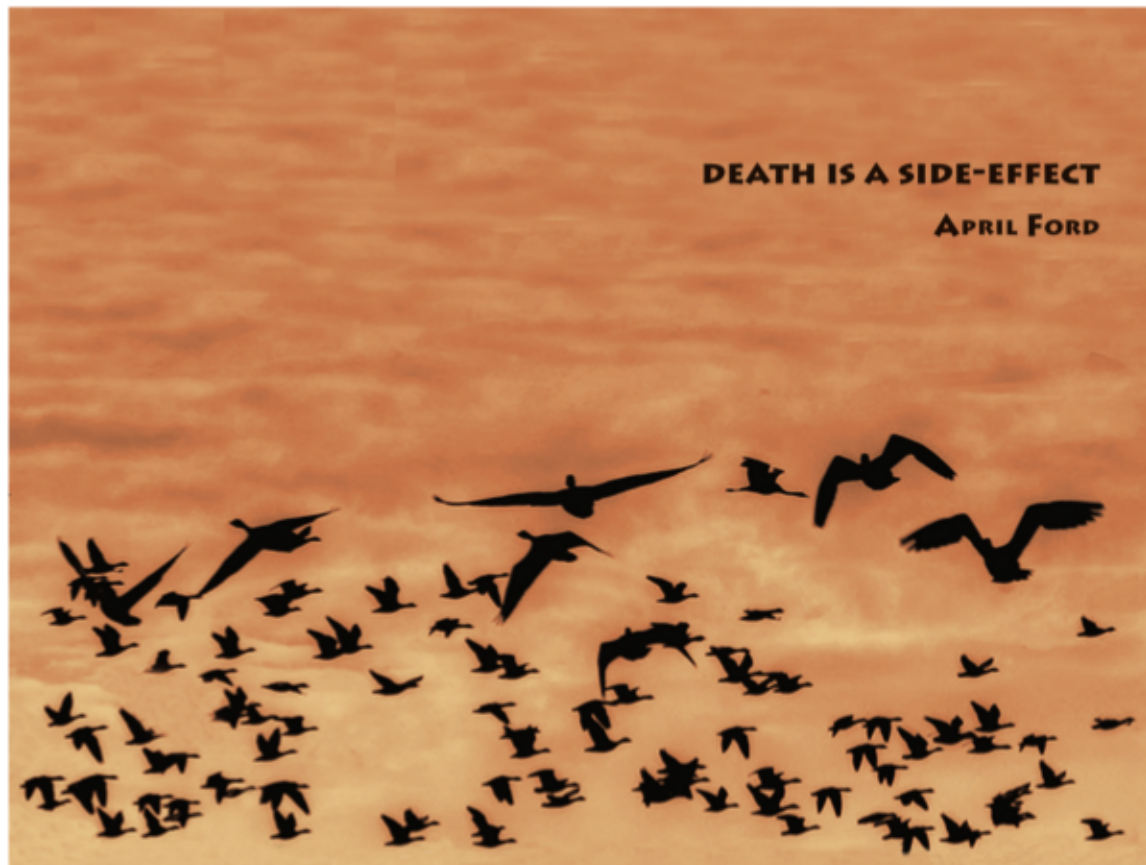


DEATH IS A SIDE-EFFECT by APRIL FORD



CONTENTS

After he's gone
Bad TV Shows from the 90s
Hair
she
Sweet Tea

Caesura

City Dusk
Amber Alert
If I Have a Daughter
You Have the Women
Death Is a Side-Effect
Sunrise
Safe

After he's gone

you stand bravely at the bar, hips jutted to hide your belly concave from the humiliation of being left for a younger woman—a girl, most would call her.

Honeyed whiskey whispers to your heart: You look better ten pounds lighter. Grief has been good for your figure!

You tell yourself men like curvy girls only until the curves blur like smudged comic book lines. Then the girls become women watching over their shoulders for more girls. Go figure.

On the bright side: Now that grief has gutted you, you can wear skinny jeans again and get attention with your jutting hips, because not all middle-age women have camel toes.

How to explain how it feels to see your ex-lover love someone new, to imagine her young face flushed from orgasms that belong to you, as your ex-lover croons, "I needed a change, you know? We started to look like those people who look like their pets, except we never had a pet."

The bartender gives you more honeyed whiskey *on the house*. He's cute & you'll probably fuck him tonight. After he leaves, you'll imagine the two of you stockpiling candy cigarettes and canned foods for the next fin du monde.

April Ford lives in Montreal with her rescue cat and matching dressers.
Her debut novel, *Carousel*, is forthcoming in Spring 2020 with Inanna Publications.
In 2015, her short story "Project Fumarase" won a Pushcart Prize.

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