

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 6 | Issue 1

Article 14

June 2006

Prey

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Recommended Citation

Laramée, Alisha (2006) "Prey," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 14.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol6/iss1/14>

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Laramée: Prey

PREY

Alisha Laramée

The day I walked into those woods, I smelled it before I saw it. The bloated boar had already grown too big for its dark purple and blue skin, stretched tight over the swollen space. White maggots ate paths in and out of the eye sockets. The rotting body's weight muzzled the long snout shut. I tried pushing it over with my foot, the way perhaps a killer does to see if his victims are dead. The smell of any rotting animal is the same. The guidebook said Rwanda is about the size of Vermont; maybe that's why I went. Or maybe, because it said that in an abandoned school building I could see 500 bodies. Dusted in lime. Reduced to shriveled skin over bones—some broken, some missing. I could barely determine their sex: length of a femur, clumps of hair, brown teeth, shreds of a cotton skirt still clinging to a woman's hipbone. I imagined the day her neighbor dropped the machete on her skull. Like chopping wood. 500 pieces. But my gaze couldn't raise her remains, nor lift the fetid flesh of the blackening boar whose bullet slowly lurched toward the earth.

Vermont 2004, Rwanda 2001