

On a Farm in Iowa

CHRISTOPHER GAUMER

Near yellow-tasseled corn stalks
a snake repositions a frog, swallows it
slowly, gradually. My sisters & mom look on;
the farmer, bored—*where's Seth?*
See the red, bubbling entry point.
Fangs slurp the poor frog.
Farmer: *now this is a pastime.*
Old gravel road cornfield killing, church friends.
Here—take as much as you can freeze.
We were the pastor's family.
I loved the VCR and hand-me-downs,
Biblical bears devouring children! Seth,
farmhand, son of farm smell—
felt to me like stiff sharp grass.
Seth knew knots, the term *corner*
lattice angle, the origin of milkweed.
Lord, I prayed him inside the frog,
the old hide-and-seek go die.
I ate lunch on my knees, snake side.
Seth's last twitching leg—*it's over,*
let's go. Mustard-brown sedan,
no seatbelts. Mom described our
trash bag-shucking future.
I let my eyes go blurry. At every row—
corn, corn—I clicked my jaw.

