

Roadkill

by [Esta Jarrett](#) in the [July 2026](#) issue
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It's been the roadkill
since the hurricane
that has killed me.

I never saw the bodies:

the man
who was buried in rubble
and told his rescuers to leave him
because everyone he loved
was underneath him,

or the woman
who boosted her daughter onto the roof
before the floodwaters washed her away
(her daughter now says
her mother is a mermaid),

or the friend
who would not leave his dog
and was last seen
holding him on the roof
as their house floated away.

Those stories will not let me go.
But I never saw their bodies.

Now roadkill lines the interstates:
raccoons, possums,
skunks, birds,
squirrels, cats, and dogs,
but mostly deer.

Blood smeared across asphalt,
torsos swollen
and legs sticking up,
collapsing into piles of fur
as I drive past again and again,

going to meetings
about how to rebuild.
Sitting in powerless rooms
and being told

I'm resilient.

I see trees
that died in the storm too,
now chopped
and lying
in piles.

Once they were home and shelter
where deer could run and hide.
Now there is no place left to run
but out into the road,
staring down oncoming lights.

In the first days after the storm,
I felt like running into the lights too.
It would have been easier,
simpler, cleaner
(just for me, can it be just for me?),

letting my leg stick up
and slowly collapsing.
Would I become a mermaid
if it was life itself
and not a river
that washed me
away?

I'm still here.
But every day, I see the deer.

I want to put up a roadside cross
for every body,
until the way is a tunnel of crosses
for us to drive through and back,
and through and back.

More crosses every day.
Crosses rising to the sky.
Crosses hemming us in
until we can't drive anymore,
and have to

stop,

and the interstate becomes
a thicket of crosses
for a fawn to hide in with her mother,
until a new tree sprouts
and grows.

I will crawl into the thicket
with them and with our dead,
pulling the leaves around us,
and we will breathe, and breathe,
and breathe.