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Poem by Carol Dorf and Autumn Stephens

Talking Writing celebrates collaborations between poets and other artists in the Spring 2017 "Borders" issue and a related panel at AWP: ["A Poet and a Cartoonist Walk into a Bar: Collaboration Across Genres."](#) [5]



The Future Labors Over Her CV; Like You, She's Made Some Errors

She could care less if you label her nights: one man's ceiling, and so on.
What can you capture in that net—an army of holes?
She contradicts every damn word you say:
you say tomato, I say carpaccio, and she says Soylent.

A mistake, to think there is a plan. Talk to your shrink, take meds.

The Future Labors Over Her CV

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You are frozen out before the first winter rains.
Tomorrow heats up and up; why do you worry about the winter?
She tells you two truths and a lie, but who's counting.

She says hell no, but it's not personal, just the beast's nature.
She counsels risk assessment, interviews insurance agents,
expects you to pack a time capsule with the music you loved
at twenty, but then you wanted silence.

Sometimes she just has to repeat herself. Chicken or egg; salt.
Shadow of shadow—Oz, her other name. Check out the "photos."
Most bedrooms locate conflict. Why should yours be different?
She offers three tickets out. You keep one, then hide the others.

Upend the past. All the garden's worms return to work.
When she asks if you're okay with the change, dial 911.
A grief of things fills your closets, so you pack a donation box.
In your posthumous life, you will orate to hidden children.

Ask her, you meat eaters—what should be done with all the bones?
Blind to the law, time flirts with governing—hold on to your children.
She appears closer at night, like the moon or the final breath.
Who will offer free replacements for your engine of speculative dread?

When she holds your hand, fingers go missing. What's love, anyway?
They think they can work solutions for her, before winter rains.
She dictates music for the service. Oh, you never liked hymns?
You could line up or alternatively order a latte.

She steals your carefully packed suitcase, dumps it on the road.
Despite all temptation, she refrains from eating her young for today.
That first violent explosion before your time, before anyone's time.
First she sings you to sleep, then jolts you awake in the dead of night.

When will you be secure enough to read the natural?
Your jet this morning, courtesy. Coffee's up to you.
Obscurity. Not orchids twisting through the fallen back fence.
Press leaves between wax paper sheets, read between the lines.

There are an awful lot of questions, but no time for replies.
She ends at _____. What's left, scribbling in the margin?
She prowls your darkened house, pleased to find you sleeping all alone.
In our dystopia, gendered robots will be specialized for sex and xxx.

She hands out sun, dogs, candy, but you want a personal gift.
While we were scanning the compass, someone snuck off with our backpacks.
Future drones will sport shades of green and gold to distract
from their bitter purpose like dragons dazzling before blowing fire.

Like a rich woman in furs, she warms her hide with soft targets.
She invites you to a magic show, but doesn't name the venue,
then washes away your labels. Find another hobby, take up
agnostic lovers. Gravity maneuvers bright assertions of time.

Art Information

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Carol Dorf is poetry editor of *Talking Writing*. Her chapbook *Theory Headed Dragon* is available through Finishing Line Press. Her poetry has been published in *Glint*, *Slipstream*, *Spillway*, *Sin Fronteras*, *Antiphon*, *About Place*, *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, *Scientific American*, *Best of Indie Lit New England*, and elsewhere. She teaches mathematics in Berkeley, California.

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Autumn Stephens is a TW contributing poetry editor, author of the *Wild Women* series of women's history and humor, editor of two anthologies of personal essays, and former co-editor of the *East Bay Monthly*. She has written for the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and numerous other publications. She conducts expressive writing workshops for cancer patients and survivors in Oakland, California, and teaches private writing classes.

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