

# *Ode on a Birthday Card*

by Jakob Bermas

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Dear Son,  
Happy Birthday! Yes, inside that box with holes punched  
Is a corn snake for you.  
You deserve it. But please I lend you a warning:  
Don't forget to feed it.  
If you do, it will start to develop a hate.  
Every time you enter the room it will stare its dark beads at you.

I will pass your corn snake in my study.  
He's doing research on the best ways to eat 12-year-old boys.  
I will say it's a side effect of my medication—  
I did not see that.  
I did not see that.

A mistake on my part. I should have done something.  
I will find a note on your comforter:  
"I have eaten your son and taken your car."

I will turn on the television and see your corn snake racing  
down interstate 5 in my white Prius.  
He is heading for the border!  
6 police cars will be chasing him.  
A helicopter will shepherd commands.  
They will shoot the tires 78 yards away from corn snake freedom.  
Officer Larry who eats a broiled chicken leg every morning and wears a pinky ring  
will interrogate your corn snake along with the balding yet still handsome Officer Kerry.  
The corn snake will admit one thing:  
He didn't feed me.

It will set the news ablaze:  
Animal rights pundits will battle in their boxes on the morning news.  
The president will tweet. Ending his thoughts with the snake emoji.  
A joke in the monologue of the Late Show  
Will make a man from Raleigh, North Carolina laugh.  
His hand is wrapped around his Girlfriend's hand.  
She is beautiful and wears a blue necklace and a red and dark blue flowered sundress.  
In his pocket is a small box harboring his grandmother's ring.  
He plans to ask his Girlfriend to marry him while they walk the Brooklyn Bridge.

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Their love will struggle.  
We don't have a strong connection anymore, she will say on the edge of their bed.  
But we belong together, the man will plead.  
Our couple's attempt for a love that wrinkles will fail.  
And who is to blame?

The man will end up living alone.  
Failing to make the dishes she once crafted.  
Listening to the songs they fell in love to.  
Smoking and staying up late:  
"There should be stars for great wars like ours," he will think.  
This is all very silly and meaningless.  
Just please, do not forget to feed your corn snake.  
And please, eat *some* of the cake  
Your mother spent a long time on it.