

smelled of tobacco, coffee and a Bulgarian rose perfume my aunt also used to wear. She asked me if my eyes were mismatched. I informed her that I had a grey eye and a brown eye.

The lady wrinkled her nose. It didn't occur to me to explain that there were many mismatched things in my life. For instance, my mother's expectations.

My mother asked me how it went. When I told her, her lips tightened as if a magic string had been pulled through their flesh and someone was tugging hard at it.

That spring, the Beloved Leader came and I was not there to give him flowers.

For the remainder of the school year, we dined in silence and I didn't lift my offending eyes from the plate.

On The Way Out

Erica Plouffe Lazure

The Way Out! was the one ride at the carnival guaranteed to topple your stomach, to bend and wail your oesophagus, to feel your gut in your throat, and only a steady scream would keep down the hot dogs and spun floss. Our mothers let us ride because they trusted the strap-in safety belts, trusted the system would keep us safe. It gave us our wild, ten-minute ride of topsy and turvy and a guaranteed return to our mothers, and in time we'd become the responsible adults the current ones needed us to someday become because "Who's gonna wipe our ass?" they'd joke. "Not me!" we'd reply. "Not yet!" And so when the carnival power lines cut that night, leaving us stranded mid-scream, newly free of inertia, our bodies suspended in the tiny tin box, for the first time we saw the world below us dark and still save for the few glowing generator-fed lights, the stumbling clusters of fairway bodies, and we began to cry for our mothers, cried to bring the power back, to be free, to be on the ground away from the darkened horizon. "Who's gonna come for us?" one of us said, palms pressed against her now floating skirt, and another cried "Satan!" and all within earshot screamed in the dark on the tip top of the longest arm in the tiny tin box, each of us clutching our seat belts, sniffing tears down our throats.

And when the power returned, some 10 minutes later, you could feel the current surge on the air, as each light glint its calliope glow red then blue then green then red again, and the vendors settled back into selling the bagged spun floss and the

hot dogs, and the din of eighty different melodies hovered above the tents, and our tin box on *The Way Out!* lifted with all of it, its stiff electric arm arcing us slowly, reluctantly, back to earth.

Vacation Dog

Pamela Painter

The first photo of our boxer appeared with our dog sitter's text *Couldn't pass up chance 2 see Grand Canyon. Will take good care of Philco.* So, there is Annie with Philco standing against the red rust backdrop of the western-most part of the Canyon. Annie is smiling emoji-like into her guy's camera, Philco's leash tightly wound around her forearm, his tongue lolling out in Philco-joy. My husband, George, snorts in annoyance when I show him the photo and goes back to pawing through his mother's desk for checkbooks, bills, any uncashed stock certificates. He insisted I accompany him to Seattle to help clear out her ten-room house and has relegated me to silver, china, and her collection of glass animals, as if I didn't know he's been bringing his intern, Isabelle, here for the past three months. She probably chose the guest room's garish sheets, scattered the candles here and there, and forgot to step back into the purple silk triangle of thong, peeking out from under the bed. Annie's next photo has all three, Annie, Philco, and her guy drinking tequila in the back of his red pick-up, a floppy tent with scraggly trees in the background. George says he hopes Philco isn't returned to us with ticks or fleas. I've been hoping to avoid an STD. The texts and photos keep coming as if to assure us that the kidnapped—dog-napped—Philco is still alive. Philco catching a Frisbee. Philco asleep on his back. Philco peeing on a yucca plant, about to get a needle in his back paw. I save each photo and follow their canyon tour on line. Three days later, I plan a trip of my own and leave for

Sleep is a Beautiful Colour

A collection of flash-fictions

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