

## from *Daughter-Son*

*Sarah Heston*

---

My cat lies in a crease of blanket on the bed, dirt on both our bodies from her stroll in the morning's first sun before she came back into bed to fold in with me. She has new heat, and shares. A child's fitted sheet pinned across my bedroom window scoops air and exhales. Maybe it was mine when I was a child. Outside this house it's spring, birds and leaves a sound on the wind. Other cats are hunting in the tall grass out back, their wild eyes set on the squirrels jumping across one old oak to another, the passage and play from backyard to backyard that I've seen my entire life from this bedroom window, and there might be guns buried around the roots of the big tree.

The fitted sheet beats in the window corners when it holds wind, slapping the glass with a good sound I don't want to leave, a sound that is like plucking the petals of a hard flower before I think that I've never done such a thing and wonder if I am still asleep. But the beating does make sense—a hard sound separated from the heart and fist, only of the wind like birds and leaves. Behind my eyes holds the dreams of last night, of a body hacked away or still. But the sheet and window are the same and there are guns buried in the backyard as they have always been. These might be facts.

I've slept in the fetal position but that didn't help much, as sleep has changed. But comparing what nightmares used to be like and what they are now also doesn't help. Charts and countries can be compared. The people coming up to me to say "sorry," or the people who say "I know what it's like," or people saying "it could be worse, he could have died before he quit drinking, you could be in a war, many children know of genocide, many children have dead parents and are orphans and are stronger for it," these people don't acknowledge the quiet, solitary growth of a mourning while they compare suffering of the world. Yesterday, my neighbor, the wife of a minister, told me that she said goodbye to my father as he climbed on his motorcycle that one afternoon, and then she set her eyes on me good: "I knew he wasn't coming back, ever again. I knew he would die. I felt it." She should make a chart of the things she knows. Her

weighing of the difference in how moments feel doesn't help anyone, and speaking to her would only have been a lie, an explanation of my misery that assumes my own understanding—at 16 and now, from the future writing the present. What would I have said, "I believe you?" I would have to lie to speak to her. That lie is ungotten and the truth is a line pulled tight across a lifetime.

I will get out of bed today because there is something I have to do and maybe I wouldn't if I didn't have to do something. After today I won't have anything to do that I can think of—I will think of sleep, touching my dreams from last night with my eyelashes and teeth. The haze covers the front of my face and slides down my throat. There were two dreams and they are still here, holding down my arms and neck and they are precise for being the last time I saw my father.

I come into the first dream leaping over our front fence, into the neighbors' yard. Their grass is so green and wet with life; their house smells like linen inside, with white drapes and white couch coverings. They aren't home but I run inside because I know every way in and out of the house from spending time there with the daughter Ginny since the day we were born, on the same day and year; I know how their doors allow a view of the outside world and another section of the house in each room, like they're home is a series of train cars going around a turn. Or a cut in the world, a wood circle under the oaks that tangle above all our houses to provide a trail for cats and squirrels all the way down the street. But there are not animals in this dream. And I've been running for a long time. There is no one in the neighborhood except the One, his will a swing of a blade into face.

He is coming to kill me with a rusty claw that I think is to lift hay but today it is to kill me. I don't know where to go with so many doors so I go out the front one into the street. He grabs me there by screaming into his fists so hard that they burst vessels in my own arms, and he pushes me into the neighbors' beautiful, flowering yard, the moisture warming my feet and then not, as he pulls me into the front

of him against his chest. My body is going backwards at his will, and only goes forward if I'm slamming into his center. His chest is the largest chest a man can have, and it's red with blood under skin, his heart seething with the want to expel me. He has never worn a shirt as the man he is now. No shirt will hold him in because his screams would rip it off. If he isn't bellowing he is silent, but the echo of his holler is in the backbeat of this world. Here in the yard, where as a child in another world Ginny and I faced each other with our fathers on each side of the fence, swallowed pennies they gave us, and smiled to show them we had healthy throats, he hangs me from the tree with hooks, the hooks growing now on the trunk and shooting from his hands, connecting everything to everything with stripped flesh, and he skins me starting at my sides, over my ribs. The skin hangs down but blood shoots up to my chin in the first slice off of me. He will think of nothing until I die and now that I'm dying, I taste pennies. I am so lonely.

Then I wake up from sleep because the house is like a ghost field with smells of jasmine and sulfur. I swing my legs over my bed and I never make a sound as I walk into the living room to see something I know will be there. But I'm not seeing from my eyes; I see only from the back and left of my head, my body inching forward to the apparition and grabbing it. He is dressed from collar to ankle in denim, swaying because he is about to fall over until I grab his shoulders hard enough to bruise him but I can't bruise him. We are the same height and I am shaking him because he is disappearing and I realize this is another dream. This is my only chance to get him back. His eyes open slightly, but his pupils are rolled back into his head. He is not breathing. Our living room is the same flat world as when he was pulling my skin down off my body, which I realize he just did minutes before, and outside there are no birds ever again.

In this world there is only the man killing me or the man dying in front of me. The haze lightens as my hands lighten on him.

He is steady on his feet now and he isn't going anywhere. I am. I will go back to a world that has birds and cats but they will never be the same because I am not a part of that world anymore. I grab his back by throwing my body into him, chest to chest, father and daughter. I am holding him tighter than I thought I could, because I have the will he put in me, the ability to surprise myself with how strong I can be, how fast I can get something done. How hard I can

work. *Wake the fuck up*, I tell him. I am waking up. *Don't go. No, don't you go.* I am going.

I woke up with my eyes already open and my head lifted from a tense neck, watching the fitted sheet catch air in the corners and beat the window frame, and I thought something so simple, banal: it's spring. And I felt something true, correct—the whipping sheet is the only part of the morning I want to think about. That sound—no abstraction. The surrender of cotton to a thump. It kept me contained for a second, and made a rhythm for a song repeating in my head, now: I am sleeping inside of my father's name-sound, the Tre-vor Bry-ant Hes-ton clicking from his murderous fingers, the Tre-vor a taut bridge into a world whose air-caught beginning is isn't is the sound to running tiers out—

Tre-vor

Tre-vor

Tre-vor

Tray-vohr

Trey-voyer

Tre-veer

and Bry-ant is the skin pulled broad my body what bit my dreams, the hacking bay of my breasts boor his hands, a burned world barring clothing where Tre-vor, beast, wants the bell 2-syllable of my cut nipples with hook—

Bry-ant

Bry-ant

Bry-ant

Br-eye-ent

Br-eye-ain't

Brr-yant tt

and Hes-ton is the sureness of his whisper while hunting me hard hunt through windows hung homes run empty for his hunting me before I wake, before he he's cuts Bry-ant me—

Hes-ton

Hes-ton

His-ton

Hest-one

Hiss-town Hiss

His-He's-won.

The phone starts ringing and I am still in bed. Last week at work it was me calling, and my messages are still on the answering machine. I hear someone breathing on the tape now, hard, and saying "oh god" over and over. Then he or

she hangs up. This happens several times each morning.

I get out of bed and walk into the living room, seeing the space as two layered rooms, the one with vapor and the one I live in. I walk the same pace and path from my last dream, and lift my head to see the non-dream. There are a group of my friends sitting there, all dressed as nice as a group of teenagers can dress. They have a mess of black clothing handy anyway. I am wearing a faded grey utility vest, his, over a brown smock dress, mine, what I've worn all week and refuse to take off, even for today's formal event. Something about my naked body. I can't bare to see the pale slopes and orange hair. Today is my father's memorial and my father doesn't have a body. This is why we call what will happen today a "memorial" instead of a funeral. His retinas were harvested, I heard, along with his organs.

I've seen my father gut a deer and prepare it for serving. So like that, I know where they cut his body to take out what others could use. Then they burned his muscle and bone into a pile of ash and brought it to me in a coffee can while I was working at Tower Records. I quit working there and today we will not even pretend that he has a body somewhere we are celebrating. He was no solider and he is not lost but he is gone just the same and I have to find the guns in the backyard. People keep telling me.

My paternal grandfather pulls into the driveway with his wife, Kathryn, a woman he has been married to for decades but I've never met. Every time my father and I visited him, she wasn't there and we never asked questions. My grandfather, Bryant, would casually mention that she had gone on a girls' weekend. She did that a lot it seemed, yet only when we were around, and I started to wonder what kind of a marriage they really had if one or both of them were gay or gambling addicts. I invented them. When we arrived, Bryant seemed happy to see us, even if his wife hated my dad his whole, young life.

I go outside to greet Bryant and Kathryn without even a word to the dark, young cloud hanging out in my living room. She is wearing a floral print dress that women have laying around to quietly attend affairs they aren't specifically involved in. She looks like a good wife, and she's right; she is not implicated.

"Hello Sarah, so wonderful to finally meet you," she tells me, and shakes my hand with both her own, "although I wish it were under better circumstances."

"My father just cut me open at the ribs and I see right

through your dress," I tell her. No, I reply, "yes, nice."

They stand at the white picket fence with hands in pockets and frizzy hair, their joined stance a union of knowing neither of them will ever stand differently, and I am on the other side of the fence. This is no metaphor. None of us know each other enough to read into the white line properly, but the real action of choosing sides is comforting, welcome. The sun is bright and high behind them, vibrant on their crowns, but my father's cars are with a layer of dust that appears dreamy and fluid, like a whisper running away, Tre-vor, and here is the metaphor.

"Well, we'll be off now to the service. We'll see you there. You know how to get there, right?" Bry-ant asks me, the gentleman always. He means, "I love you. Be safe."

"Yep." I had planned the service and picked the place. I had grown up in this town. And I'm too much a part of a world that can't touch their own to care about accommodating his generosity and concern. I don't want it.

"See you there then, and we should talk later about what might be in the attic or backyard" he says as he turns Kathryn with his hand on the small of her floral back and opens the passenger door of his car for her. He drove them in his "driving car." He also has a "hauling truck" and in his garage is her car to use when she escapes for the weekends when people like us show up. When people like me and dad used to show up. I wonder if she ever drives outside of that time. I wonder what is in this attic or buried in the backyard. My grandfather might actually know.

Later tonight Bryant climbs into the attic and finds nothing. Months later, and years after that, Bryant Heston will tell me that I was rude to his wife when we first met. He will tell me in a dated, dead, typed, and hand-signed letter that I monopolized the suffering over my father's death and I will tell him that he wasted fatherhood. He will tell me that he finds homosexuality abominable and question how I could ever imply that he is gay or a spy since he served his country for years in the air force. He will remind me that he paid for my father's cremation and will not tell me that he got that money back from the man who killed my father. I don't know of these events yet, but I can see the lead up to them more clearly than I can see the sheet beating fifteen minutes ago. I hear the future tense of there here is no past anymore, there is only the place to write from the new now present noun. All the things I can think about at 16-27 will

not be able to save me though—greater consciousness does not save anyone, Sarah Heston. That Bryant and I will love each other in a way that is beyond guilt and duty—this is a lie. But at this point in the day, the 16 now, I think we still have to find those guns in the backyard, together. He was the 2nd American soldier who loved my grandmother out of the concentration camp, after all. And I am descendant from her, no lone gun hunter in his book of how to tell this.

Right now, standing on the porch of our home, I don't know where the pile of illegal guns might be and this supposed knowledge about where they are actually buried in a blanket or locked in a chest in the attic is just a whisper in the air from people who have heard him say that he hides things places. I looked out the window this morning and the world outside looked serene; but our guns have never looked anything but serene. The AK I held the night he died is illegal, but who's counting that one when there might be more illegal guns buried—maybe the guns have been like the truck beds and metal sheds under two great oaks and two histories; maybe they will remain as they have always been, and my rope swing is still rotten but functional, and the tall spring grass is at its brightest shade of green only days before it will turn yellow and die.

I walk on my toes through our carport, careful to avoid metal chips and gasoline, into our back yard and examine the dirt for inconsistency. A cement ditch divides the house and backyard, right where the oak roots fade. Maybe the guns are in the cement. Maybe they are under the sheds. Maybe he climbed one of the oaks and hid them in the hollow part the bees abandoned. There isn't a flat section of ground and holes have been filled in, grass taller on the spots less patted down. The yard holds our secrets as it has always.

The concrete ditch may have taken time out of my back in the future when I need it, when I have kids, when I have sex to have kids, but the ditch keeps our home from flooding in the winter now, the new present where one ditch digger benefits, whereas before the dirt hill ran right into our house and soaked our carpets in the bedrooms when it rained, when two ditch diggers lay wet together but each in a bed each side of wall. The work needed to be done to stop flooding, and my father trusted no landlord to take care of digging like we could. We took care of many things. But he dug more holes than I ever did.

There is only one hole in the backyard I can't point

out as not his. That hole is mine and no one heard what I did as I stood over it and patted the topsoil back in its place. My father wanted me to be responsible for digging one that was only mine because we're Hestons-He's-tons-men's-men. Our cat gave birth to a batch of kittens and one deformed runt that cried and cried. My dad told me to kill it for its own good and now I know I never then knew if that cat really suffered or was simply different. He suggested a shovel or boot sole to the head but I couldn't. I heard somewhere that drowning is the best way to go, if you have to, so I put the kitten in my hand, and my hand into the toilet. It stopped moving in my hand, and from my hand that wet fur baby got placed in the hole I prepared for it. Once I finished scooping dirt on more dirt, I raised from the spot of ground and heard that baby meowing from inside the earth, still alive and in pain and I don't know if that pain was before or after I drowned it wrong. I clawed the dirt and ran back to the toilet, kneeling there a long time before I buried it for good. The second time I stood above it, the hole was silent, but you know, now this now I don't know which burial was worse. Now I hear that cat calling for help, but there are parts inside of me that will never hear how that hole made a noise. The silence and cat call are parts of me, playing back and forth, a joke and a punch line that ends with me wondering—if I tried to kill myself, could I even do it right? I have never told about that cat to anyone. About the part of me that doesn't know life and death properly. I don't want it want this.

By the cement ditch, seeing my hole by the rope swing, I don't know if I'm angry at the labor my father made me perform, or the culture of labor his father instilled in him. Trevor, not Bryant, made killing that cat my job and I'll never forgive him for that, in any present. No—the hole's not mine, it's him in me, the terrible parts of who he was that make me who I am and I still can't stop loving him.

I go back inside the house to my own world where I can see today the way my eyes allow, setting aside the man's remnants inside of me as much as I can, and sit with my friends who all look like they aren't trying to figure out what to do. They've had no jobs like I've had jobs and if they have, well none of us will ever tell each other because the silence mitigates. But they are here and that's enough for all of us. Being near is what saves everyone at least once, and their not knowing some of the things I've done, even while sitting in my living room, saves me right now. My father

and I are each in a place through a wall, like our beds, like memory, like holes in the ground in the history of men and a little redheaded girl. Now I'm awake, now I remember myself as a child waking from sleep to a home filled with light but not my father. I remember because now feels the same as then. I remember waking because it seems too quiet and I know my home is empty. I am six.

I am seven.

I am four.

I am eleven and just before twelve.

I am awake. He is gone. I call my mother, whose number I have memorized because it is my own during the week. She tells me to go next door and look for him at Barb and Bob Rapanak's. She says she will stay on the phone until I return and this helps me because I know if I scream she will hear me. This is the memory of loving my mother; this night, with my hair still wet from a bath hours before, my nightshirt hanging off my large, boyish shoulders, I am her child. At the rock house next door without windows, my father is sitting in the corner. He is a bachelor. Adults look up at me but aren't surprised. They are doing what adults do all night in homes without windows. They will not sleep. He brings me home and I feel guilty for taking him. But I need him there for me to fall asleep. I need his noise to help me fade without nightmares, and only in this moment where he was lacking do I return to as a sixteen-year-old so I can find when my mother was not lacking. It is over the phone and I love her like it hurts, I love her like the Supremes songs we would sing together in the car and she'd smoke and I'd watch her suck smoke in while choking on the lyrics, and I would learn every line—I know every line of every Supremes song and every flavor of TCBY frozen yogurt we got when I was her baby girl. She is still, still alive but not in the same way. In this memory that I will give myself often from now on, I have seen where one thing becomes its other, the terror turns to brilliance, the world opens up and I am struck with compassion and tenderness, only through the vessel of blood, and there are no lies in this, no undoing. My mother, now she is forty.

She is sixteen.

She is old.

She is dying.

Her teeth are falling out and her hands  
touch only her center, meth and nicotine,  
there is a woman, there is a womb,

and I have one of those too but don't feel like a woman.

Today I will tell hundreds of people who my father used to be before his skull was smashed into mashed potatoes. And I will neglect the telling of what's left of him: retinas in a bag to be sewn into another man's wet holes, sunglasses with matted hair and dipped in the blood soup of his sunken skull, organs that will be thrown into a Simi Valley landfill because they were harvested just in case but they have no purpose but for the damage and his Hepatitis C. His mother Dagmar Ott (to) Dagmar Evelyn (to) Evelyn Kimberlin (to) Evelyn Heston (to) Dagmar Kimberlin allowed for this taking, and her confusion helped no one. She bought a new wig for his funeral. At Derek's funeral, my father's big brother who was stabbed to death while he lay sleeping in an abandoned house, she hadn't been old enough to wear wigs yet. But she's always been old to me, foreign and old; she named her sole daughter Dresden and I've never known why, and now she is without her one son left. Her one child left. He took care of her and now I take care of her. I will take care of her. I will try but she will accuse me of stealing and of Russia, and I will just keep thinking about duty until one day I tell her I've had enough.

"Sarah, should we go? Who's driving?" Scarlet asks me.

"Me. I'm driving. Let's go."

Five of us squeeze into my old Volvo and the rest go in other cars the mile to the memorial service. My car is slow, quiet, heavy. It's my Cadillac of Volvos. The stereo tells us the moment in metaphor and I choke through every line.

There may still be hairs from my father's head somewhere on the concrete because these hairs were ripped from the side of ear when his ear was ripped from his head and that man who hit him never got out of his car to check on my father or help pull the side of his head off the concrete and lay his head back so as he died he could face upward, old sky instead of new road, or have a chance for his lungs to clear of blood, drain to the earth and not clot over his open eyes, open until paramedics came. Robert Evans Jr. is a pile of skin, billows of Alzheimer's and trips to church in a Volvo he hit some man with. I've never met him and that is a lie. People tell me that I don't have to come to the hearing and I do what they tell me. But they are all wrong. I find out later that they were all wrong and I was wrong to listen to them. This lie, this choice; this will never leave me. My father fed us by working on Volvos and don't think the irony of the whole situation is available yet. Paranoia, destiny, then irony,

and the stages sound like a movement, like this:

I am driving in our town where he just died.

I am driving my father's car on my father's hairs.

I am driving on my father's head.

And I have dug holes and ditches like the man taught me so I will get to that memorial and I will mimic the man.

\*

At the memorial, a parking spot is saved for me in front of the glass doors and the place is jammed. I go in a cloud to say what people want to hear, blow fog from my lips through the microphone to cover the audience and they exhale, relax. A witch's spell. I want to take care of these people by being stoic because I don't understand yet that this is not the way. My mother is wearing this little thing and she sings along to the Jimi Hendrix song that plays because she loves him—Jimi Hendrix—because she enacts love so no one notices what she lacks. I wonder what it's like to have a mind of a woman who would wear such a thing to a memorial for her daughter's father; for a second I pretend to be inside of her again. She is without context and only with herself, even next to me, presently and always. She has transcended all our notions of cordiality and love; her life is a stream of presence and single notes. Like the Buddha. She is something none of us can recognize. When I'm older, when I write this, I pretend to be in her because I know she'll think it's unfair that I write this, but as I write this, at 27, she is in jail and has just failed her piss test, so will be in jail for a lot longer this time. Back to 16.

When I shift to reach for her neck David Hollen sees me and blocks my reach. This is one of her last days of ease; now the county knows she has been getting welfare for a daughter that she doesn't have because Trevor is dead and records are examined before I get social security, after I prove I'm his daughter and on my own. My mother will have to start paying back the county. She tells me this is what holds her back now. This and a bum leg she got when she wore stilettos bartending.

I say unforgivable, kind things into the microphone and then it's over. Hundreds of people come up and grasp my hand on their way out and I hold back vomiting from each touch. But I'll never see most of them ever again.

\*\*\*

After the memorial and gathering at my grandparents' house, my fog settles in heavy, and I don't nod-smile anymore. David takes me to Wildwood and we set off on a

trail, walking at first, but then I run. There's a hawk circling in the sky, looking for food to bring back to share with its partner who is at the nest, fending off crows who would eat the hawk eggs only out of spite. We are in Ventura County and the month is April, a hawk's season and home half the year. Two hawks nest in front of my house in the Eucalyptus trees. My father shot circling crows for bothering his eyes in the sky. He loved hawks, he photographed them, he worshipped them enough that he would pull over the truck when he'd see one, without explanation, and watch. I'd watch him.

When I was young enough to have not been there, one of the hawks was hurt and my father nursed it back to health. He set the hawk on his bare chest one day to set it free and our Manx cat, Maxwell, walked into the back yard. So long ago, maybe it was even Maxwell number one, who I don't know if I've met. All the Maxwells were black Manx tomcats. The hawk sunk its talons into Trevor's chest and he says that when he lifted this animal, his chest meat stretched out with the hawk's talons so he had to wait for the hawk to release on its own time and it did after a few minutes, and my dad forever until now shot crows for that hawk and its partner. I never saw the hawk on his bare chest, but I believed him. It could be a story my father used to persuade me of his power. Maybe he lied.

When I take off running down a trail, I think this might be the first time I've ever run outside of my dreams. Because I was a fat kid I never ran, I just never thought I could. I couldn't. But that was a lie, I see now. I don't know what I see. From this week on, chunks of my life will be uncertain to me. My memories will be only in this mind, as there is no one to bring them out to full bloom. No one will tell me again that I was a quiet, solitary baby, potty-trained by two and swimming even in the womb. I can't ask someone what is true and what really happened, what I dreamed of as a baby and thought about years later as real. The pennies he made me swallow at the fence with Peter and his daughter Ginny. That was so long ago, and maybe never. Behind me is hearsay, imagination, the legend of my father and the bravado people place on him. Seconds spill forward into a world without a past. My mother said all the photos burned. My father told me a hawk sat on his chest. I remember that line stitched in my mother's head. A whisper surrounds this town about buried guns wrapped in wool. Seconds build in me, circulating with my pulse, a fire I have

never known as I always thought it wasn't in me to do what more beautiful girls could do. I lied to myself and now I have a pushing, a future tense which I can record and one day speak of in the past because I have no past now. I am a movement of animal. I can run like a beautiful woman, the perfect fighter, if the one I love dies. The lie is undone.

After his ashes are delivered to me in a can, while I work, I will ask a friend to come with me to Big Sur to bury them in the forest. She will say, "I'm honored that you asked," but then when it's time she will go shopping with her boyfriend. I don't mind, I'm too much of myself for others to deal with, and this won't change. Why men will love me is why men will leave me. Why women will admire me is why they'll become frustrated with me.

I'll take the can and set out on a hike up Mt. Boney, in Newbury park, CA.. My father told me that as a child, he loved hiking up here, so this location gives me a reason to be rid of the can. I won't wait to share the ashes with his parents; I won't even tell them that I have them, and I will not scatter them meaningfully as I go along in life. Me and the can will hike up for a couple of hours, passing other hikers occasionally, and I'll nod, smile, move on looking terrible, but I will never have the kind of beauty that strikes others when they first see me, anyway. I'll look like my parents the older I get, and they look(ed) like themselves before drugs and death. My lips will be large and fade into my face without a clear line between them. Applying lipstick is something I'll never be able to do without help. My eyelashes will grow white and orange, long as a woman's, but unable to be seen unless I put mascara on them. I'll never be sure if I'm fat or not, with a waist that goes in, hips that go out, and large thighs, average breasts. My cheekbones will protrude from my face as my mother's do, but I'll never rid the feeling that I'm always growing into my form. I will wear my father's belt and buckle until one day the belt breaks and I will keep sewing it together until the leather just frays at my hips. On the trail, me and the can, we will not look well and this ritual of tossing a body's ash will not bring me comfort.

At the waterfall my fingers won't work with the lid's edge. The can won't open like I planned and when I finally get it open, it will be from my teeth, some ashes clouding in my mouth, and like that, I will not be able to stop eating them, there, squat in the woods near a diminutive trickle of water flowing down some rocks. The pile of him is soft but gritty and then I won't mind that I'm grotesque. I will

accept myself for who I am, what I look like, a daughter-son with breasts and rough skin. Being a beautiful woman that my grandfather would not make fun of means nothing if my lips are caked with a dead man. I will transcend my family at the first mouthful. He will have an identification card in his tin with him, and I'll put it in my pocket. I will never tell anyone that I eat parts of him, which parts I don't even know. And I'll never know if that is my father in that can.

The rest of ash will slump in one toss into the water with the expectation that the ashes follow the path down the rocks, into the stream and continue with the entire mess of the world. But the ashes will sink to the bottom of a hook in the stream, heavy still with the weight of a man. It was not supposed to be like this. It will not be like I thought it would be. He was will supposed to talk to me and nothing will happen except the time I'll wait for the ashes to lift with the water and circle to the surface, then bend down a rock, maybe his elbow, maybe his knee, maybe his eyelashes burned with the blood they were never supposed to see like that, maybe the parts of him they cut open to get what they could use, and where he will go is a mistake in a river.

I will sit there until all the ashes seem gone, then wipe my lip before I head back on the trail. My clean lip is only for my satisfaction in being done. When a part of him will be on my hand, I'll lick him all gone, grit and love, daughter and son. As I return to my car, I'll realize I won't be a woman like my aunts and nieces are women, I will not have a chance like beautiful women have chances. But I will walk back down the hill and drive on home and act like none of this ever happened, and it never did yet. This will be the future.

As I return down the hill, I will see hikers going up it, and they will ask me if I went to the waterfall. I will say yes and point right over there, and they will tell me the waterfall is further up, that over there is only a small part of the big one. I'll keep walking down and probably not return.