

Off the Grid

by Deborah Oster Pannell

The slicing is easy. Blade barely touching skin, flesh separating into two clean parts. A breath, and blood fills in the space, an old friend materializing in the shadows. I am redolent with hope and desire.

I can't stop thinking of how he excised himself from my days. Nothing to tie him to the past, which, by God, was only last week. Silence vibrating with the shame of adolescent need. I am awkward in my skin, aware of a growing hunger.

I count the reasons again.

Unexplained burning. Like a layer of fat singing off my liver, that organ preventing my crumbling at the middle. Catharsis at last? I would have preferred something more like a moving picture, but I'll take what I can get.

There was that last kiss, narrated by PJ Harvey: line to heart, chasing around the table, magic of the city at night. Liquid rising - a rather potent gathering of force. What's to be done about that?

I wonder if this is how all love ends, swallowed in silence. I don't dare stop the music. I'll be alone soon enough. The blood is overflowing its borders, splashing over the edges. I am lost in the deep red, ruby red, it glistens, and I am a jewel.

