

Out of Time

by Deborah Oster Pannell

I was so high on the not knowing, I thought, you will love me for my confusion. And so I allowed myself to reach further inward than either of us felt comfortable. I imagined a delicious vanilla pudding at the core of my exploration, sweet and satisfying enough for me to forget the crude carving out of that space in the first instance.

It had been a long time ago, I told him, when I thought that all contact was necessary and foretold, before I realized that certain categories would have been better excluded from the canon of my youth.

He looked to me for direction. I had knocked the cue ball right off the table, and he needed answers, damnit - a fixative to attach the picture of his desire to a flesh and blood woman, no virtual representations or awkward expressions of remorse for missed moments.

Perhaps I was neglectful. Perhaps if I could have let the memories come tumbling out of me and merely toss them aside like a greasy potato chip bag, we could have gotten on with it.

But I was not ready in that moment. I was wet, the brush strokes still visible on my three faces, each staring apart and together, united in careful cacophony, the genius of their creator not to be discovered until years after her death.

