

Biography of a Splotch in a Parking Lot

by Epiphany Ferrell

She was not an actual woman, she was an abstract concept. She had a birth certificate, a driver's license, an assigned parking space. But she was not, in spite of all appearances, in this world. She didn't know how it happened. She hadn't died. She wasn't a ghost. She wasn't even invisible. She just wasn't see-able. She was told, often, that she had a life force that shimmered like heat on asphalt in July. Blistering. The men who loved her learned to moisturize. They fell in love with her abstraction, created their own image of her from it -- their own human female -- and when they came to unzip her, they found a woman; and that woman didn't meet the image they'd created, so she faded, quickly, each and every time, into an abstraction again. Then they returned to their wives, no worse for the experience; in fact, they often gained from it, drunk with her life force, healed in ego and worth. She was that way. She reminded this one of his youth, how he used to feel passion and idealism and hope. He saw all that in her, and he built for himself a gypsy-moth, a slight, wild thing that could give him back, not his youth (a matter of chronology, of biology) but rather some of his former love of life, dander-free, sparkling. He saw her melancholy, too, and he worked that in, and her vulnerability. And when he was finished, the gypsy moth only slightly resembled the woman, and was more real to the man than the woman was, and when he met the woman in the parking lot, an unexpected rendezvous, he didn't recognize her. He tipped his hat as though to a stranger, which indeed, she was. For another, she was a muse, unattainable, distant and lovely as a star. When, in a ponderous moment, he met her eyes, and saw in them a woman, he fled to the desert, used boxing tape to remove strands of her all-too-real hair from his clothing. And he loved his abstraction from a distance, and, she, the woman, melted into a rainbow-sheen

in the heat-shimmering asphalt of a rendezvous parking lot.

