

# The Fat Girl

*by* Gail Siegel

The fat girl whose office wall abuts mine is not kind. We share a vent that slips below the partition, heating us in cold weather, cooling us in July. I'm already chill when she raps on the wall, bellowing at me to turn up that a/c. I'm perspiring when she tells me to pump up the heat. So fat, I thought she'd be sweeter, her sweat like maple syrup.

The fat girl had clubfeet, her legs cracked and reset every childhood summer. She staggered around the pool in plaster casts while her sister tumbled from the high dive. When they sawed off the casts, her calves were pale and thin. She's still angry at her sister, and she's angry at me. She has no thin parts now.

She never leaves her desk, but food appears like magic. She slurps honeydew as I walk to the mailbox. She chomps Tootsie Rolls when I return. She chews like she's digesting power with her tacos, padding her body with gelatinous authority. Her heavy laugh rumbles through drywall like a dumptruck's reverb through my window. Odors roil up from the cooling unit: yesterday pulled pork, today fish chowder.

I want to record her smells and save them in a file, to email to starving children, to replay when I want to keep eating, to ease hunger when I'm waiting for dinner, to post online like a clip of loud music, to re-smell and re-smell and re-smell my hate.

