

haircut month

by Glynnis Eldridge

The same night your best friend of two years called you up to tell you they don't want to think about you anymore was the same night you had stood silently, leaning, head against the mustard wall in your mom's boyfriend's house, stuck listening to Randy Newman's songs about the apocalypse, thinking over and over about plucking yourself from the earth, snipping a vein like a stray hair. At home, the dog barks at something shrieking in the night, something not sheltered by this crumbling structure. Upstairs, things are moving quickly. You are looking for the scissors you haven't been able to put down for the past month, the pair you've been using to slowly chop away at long hairs that spun into tendrils, touched your navel when you stood up straight, the hairs that served well as a cloak, a shield, a mask. You look in the mirror in a bathroom reserved for someone's pet cat. Your hair is short now. You don't recognize yourself. You look at your face and try to pin it to other peoples; whose does it look like? Whose eyes do you have? Sometimes you think you look like more than one person, sometimes more than two, sometimes part of three or four or five people, sometimes no one. In the night, to what you think might be the west, you hear explosions. It's almost two in the morning. You don't look out of the window but you suspect the explosions are lighting up the sky. You wonder if they are fireworks. They don't sound like fireworks; they are booming, skipping the shrieking sound you remember of the fireworks that went off on the other side of Evan and Sarah's pond a week before this year's Fourth of July, and missing too what followed the shrieking; the firework's crash landing into your cheek, just south of one of your eye's dark circles. You had turned away from your crowd of mystified friends, who sat on the damp grass by the pond, each of their faces occasionally illuminated by the bursts in the sky. You clutched your face. It throbbed and stung in all directions, a wide dull pain, a punch laced with bleach. You rubbed your eyes like they were filled with something itchy. In the bathroom mirror you saw the damage

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and it was minimal. A small red bump accented with a deeper red spot inside of it. You felt special because you could, from that moment on, exclaim that you have had an encounter with a UFO, that one had crashed into your face. You never saw the thing that stung you.

