

Deaf

by Jamie Iredell

The inside of his ear had turned to cottage cheese. He tried elbowing his elbow in there, and grinding things out, because his doctor said that elbows were just the right size. He rooted around with a Q-Tip because his father said to do it. His father was blind, and Q-Tip instructions—on the box's reverse—have never been written in Braille. Soon, the telephone muttered when he answered, his mother's voice like the inside of a bag of cotton balls. He answered with the receiver curled to his other ear, but realized that, too, had filled with curds that smelled of what he would later learn was bacteria that grows in warm and moist places. That later was when he was sixteen and gloriously deaf, parked on the stretch of road straighter than the girl's brunette head, under the sky star-studded so that he hated the word “studded,” and he was lonely.

