

Visiting You Without Her

by Jodi Barnes

I bear the wrong gin. Your air conditioner runs cold. It is either frigid or off, the gauge broken. You are not too old to overlook these things. You can't be choosy, but you will never beg. Just an occasional choice as you settle into this hole of living without her—that's all you want. I get this. I show you by being your bobble-head doll. *Hmmm. No doubt. Of course.* Sometimes I pat your hand as if I'm you when I was five.

I don't tell you I'm often terrified that you will leave, suddenly, like she did to both of us. Even though your liver is in pickled limbo and the window is blowing like a blizzard, I ask for a drink. You pour my disappointing gift into a sour glass. I roll down my sleeves and listen.

