

Daffodil

by Kathy Fish

Some boys from Trinity stand in a group across the street. They have such shiny hair. They are brilliant! The skinny one waves to me. The sun slips behind them, behind the mountains. The skinny one cups his hands around his mouth. "Daaaaaaaphneeeee," he yells. The other boys laugh. I cross and let my backpack slip off my shoulder. "Peace," I say and the Trinity boys, they are so fine, they say peace back.

"I've been seeing my father kissing some woman in his car when I'm walking home from basketball practice," I say. "Different spots, he changes it up. Scrawny woman, hair like fingers pointing out of her head. He can kiss whoever he wants, no question. But I'm tired, seriously tired, of these displays."

The Trinity boys don't blame me at all. They know I am not stupid about the world. I am a robust girl. Nevertheless, like everyone else I have limits. I am a clock that winds down.

"Check it," I say, because there they are, Jesus, right in the parking lot of Sunnyside Foods. Like he wants me to see him. The Trinity boys follow my finger. And the skinny one whistles. My father and the woman untangle themselves. I wave my arms and yell, "Over here, hot shot."

Every night my mom dreams she's sprayed with bullets. "I can feel the blood seeping from the holes," she says. I want to scream. I want to tell her don't rock back and forth like that, don't affect that gypsy accent! Emotionally, my father is sixteen years old. The dream indicates all loss of hope.

I am the best freshman center in Terre Haute. My father sits in the bleachers at all the home games. He has saved every one of my baby teeth and carries them in a leather pouch. He has been known to show them to the other spectators. The night he moved out he shot Nerf balls into the hoop on my bedroom door. I sat on the bed with my head deep in the hood of my sweatshirt, pretending to read

Cannery Row. I am at a crossroads, Daffodil, he told me. A crossroads!

I stop at Sunnyside and buy food for dinner. I am my mother's angel. I buy cigarettes and a Bic lighter. Those boys wait across the street. I'm going to offer them a smoke. The clerk counts change. He tells me be good and shakes my hand. He doesn't care. Around here, I am a celebrity.

