

Night at the Reservoir on Airline Drive

by Kathy Fish

My brother's friend, Del, said, hey little girl, wanna Tootsie Roll? I asked him if there was anything he could do to make my Slurpee taste better and he poured a healthy dose of vodka in. That summer it was Vodka Slurpees, Vodka Mountain Dewes, Vodka Lemonades. Dad had gotten custody of us which meant we were pretty much left to our own devices. Del and I watched my brother toe his way to the edge of the cottonwood branch that arched over the reservoir. My brother, meaning to dive, and Del questioning the depth of the water. It had been quite bright with the moon but now thunderclouds roiled and gyred above us and my brother was something you could only see if you didn't look directly at him. I was 14 but could pass for 16 if I wore makeup, which I did. That night, I'd decided if Del put his tongue in my mouth, I'd let him. Far off, we saw a lightning strike and Del yelled up, you still there buddy? We thought maybe he'd changed his mind, was coming back down, when we saw his baseball cap copter to the ground. You don't want to get that wet, Del laughed and picked it up, put it on his own prematurely balding head. A car pulled up and a bunch of boys tumbled out, staggered to where we were. I was wearing my honeydew colored bikini but that night it looked gray like everything else. You could only really see white teeth, bluish arms and legs. My brother called, who's there? They were boys he knew, older boys, who yelled jump, jump you sonofabitch. I remember the crack of the branch and Del, dragging him out of the water, pounding him on the chest and then the ambulance. I remember how relieved we were, later, to hear it was only a concussion and Del had been crazily, comically trying to administer CPR to a boy who didn't need it. And my brother lying on the couch for days, how he became now, not

even sullen, just a quiet fellow who liked to stay inside, who
sometimes stared at his hands and asked why'd it hurt so much?

