

Repair Man

by Kathy Fish

The repair man dreams in black and white of cogs and band saws, electrical circuits and wires. When he wakes up, he recalls that he was once an old man. He says, Mattie I'm frightened, and she coos to him, brings milk.

He works making repairs for the subway system. Mattie says his work clothes require industrial strength. He takes them to the Wife Saver Laundromat in the retail strip near their apartment building. The repair man is studying to be a transportation engineer. He likes working underground, where it's dark and cool, but the bills are piling up. Nights, Mattie reads and rereads the texts aloud for him, her feet propped on the kitchen table. She runs a yellow highlighter over the key points.

After, they wrangle under the covers, the streetlight shining through the one, tiny window. The repair man is conscientious in this as he is with all things, light with his fingers and his tongue. His hair falls over his eyes as he works her.

He knows that someday Mattie will take to calling him Handsome Mole. That her skin will never wrinkle. That she will someday board a train with faulty brakes. He knows, but he is helpless to change things. The repair man will someday carry a backpack full of books to the Wife Saver but he will fail to open them. He'll say, Mattie I'm frightened, but she won't coo to him. And he will die alone on an ice morning, walking past the subway to church.

