

Strings

by Kathy Fish

The aunt and uncle's farm, early spring, the earth smell of unsown fields, and Sunday lunch. My uncle sprawled in the recliner, his work boots raised like an affront. Burning Camel stuck to his lower lip. Snoring. The aunts and my mother drinking coffee, my aunt whispers about strange things coming out of her when she goes to the bathroom. My mother spies us on the floor pretending to play crazy eights. She indicates with her cigarette the back door. All our lives we've been following that little point of fire. We are given kites to assemble. Rickety-ass kites. Balsa wood and paper. Balls and balls of string. We tromp down the path between the trees. The field opens up to us like something born. My older brother Bill and his girlfriend shy in the face of their molten horniness. They drop their kites and head for the barn. Bits of colored paper we tear halfway, straddle them on the strings, watch them race like children. My younger brother innovates with headlines he tears from the Press-Citizen: *Local Boy Bowls 7-10 Split!* Up, up it goes. The rogue German Shepherd is trying to bite everyone. Bit cousin Nancy in the face last month. *Couple Wed 75 Years Die Fifteen Minutes Apart.* Heavenward. O glorious day! The kites bob and weave, boxed by the wind. The German Shepherd running in circles. *Planets Collide!* Bill comes hopping out of the barn screaming. His knee wide open, dangling, meat falling off the bone (the way my aunt describes slow cooked pork ribs). The German Shepherd, insane over the blood. They'd been jumping from the hayloft, Bill and the girlfriend, his knee sliced by something under the straw. Some farm implement lying in wait, some menacing blade. *Space Aliens Take Over House of Representatives!* To the clouds! Bill, howling. Blood just everywhere. His knee inside the German Shepherd's jaws. Nobody sees Uncle John until he's there, taking aim. A blast. Bill on the ground alive and bleeding. The German Shepherd, dead. Little brother still tearing up the newspaper. *Rickety Kites Survive*

Nuclear Blast! The kites, untethered, rise further, disappear. Our faces upturned like the best kind of prayer.

