

Twine

by Katrina Gray

I grabbed a handful of butter and lifted the loose skin off the breast side of the chicken. I smeared the butter inside and closed the flap back down. The last thing to do was tie the chicken's legs together with kitchen twine and stick it in the oven. But I realized I didn't know where the twine was, not here anyway.

I knew right where it was in my old house. Second drawer on the right when you enter the kitchen from the dining room. I felt like I could just walk in there and grab it. It was in a familiar spot, but one that didn't exist for me anymore. It felt so close.

I thought of driving over there across town, steering with buttered hands. I thought of stepping up on the porch and knocking on the green door with my elbow and holding my hands up like I'm about to wash them, or dry them, palms facing my shoulders.

"Hey," I would say to my ex-husband when he opens the door, "Mind if I get the kitchen twine? I'll just be a second—" I'd step in before he had time to answer, and I'd maybe even towel off my hands at the sink. Those things would be familiar too—the towels and the sink, the window facing the crepe myrtle.

I could wander over to the bar and pour myself some cheap cream sherry. I'd have to dust off the tulip-shaped glass. What if I sat down, then? I picked the couch out myself; I was entitled. I cleaned his niece's vomit off it once. I slept on it twice.

"This coffee table is a comfy place to put up your feet," I'd tell him. I'd pat the pillow beside me, signaling to him to make himself at home. I'd grab the remote from the side table. "Did you DVR *Oprah?*"

Pretty soon I'd have to pee. The hall bathroom was mine, with my shampoos and my creams. I'd sit on the toilet, and even the toilet would feel like home. I would know to hold down the handle until the end of the flush.

He would be quiet the whole time. He would hope I would leave if he acted like I wasn't there.

But then I would get sleepy, and I would wander to the bedroom, beat. My side is on the left, because the alarm clock is on the right. I couldn't be trusted with the snooze button, he said. I would curl up and fall asleep by familiar streetlight. The room would smell like our two smells together, and I would be able to really smell it this time, being an outsider.

I would have forgotten about the chicken. And the twine.

"This is not what I want," I told him when I signed the papers. I couldn't even cry anymore. I was trapped, gagged, bound.

He acted haughty: "This is what you need."

But he has no idea what I need. Right now, I need kitchen twine, and someone to help me eat this goddamn chicken.