

Armor

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

Two girls dead. Young things, she'd read. Just out of college. Miriam imagined short skirts drawn tight across tanned thighs, hoop earrings, poofy hair. The click-clack of four inch heels on the sidewalk. Not like her sensible walkers, all leather with skid-proof soles. They probably wore too much make-up and those silly push-up bras that made young women look whorish.

She belted her coat and clutched her purse tight under her arm. Red-lettered signs plastered the lobby door, alerting residents to the at-large murderer and admonishing care in traveling alone. Miriam hesitated. In the glass she saw her once smooth neck gathered in folds, the sagging jaw-line, eyes sallow and trampled with crows' feet. The raincoat failed to hide the stubby thickness of her stomach. How had she gotten so frumpy looking? She remembered the feeling of weightlessness, of being lifted against gravity, the soft whoosh of tulle as her partner's hands grasped the bottoms of her thighs and held her aloft. In the harsh spotlights the audience had glowed, as she must have shimmered to them, so full of grace thirty years ago.

Miriam smoothed her hair. Perhaps she should buy a small gun, at least some mace. She looked again at her reflection. Age is defense enough, she thought, and pushed into the night.

