

Unintended Consequences

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

You sit there bleary-eyed morning tired, your coffee growing cold. The headlines blur. Your mother's chitter-chatter segues into wallpaper and you try to remember where you parked the car, whether it's pulled in nice and tight in the garage or whether you left it curbside, afraid the garage door lifting at god-knows-when would wake mom, but you can't remember, you don't remember much of anything, not driving, not stumbling up the stairs, not sleeping. Nothing.

But you remember this: mom already on the couch with her Scotch and week's worth of Tivo, she assumes you're with Brad and Mac, and you are, but not at the movies, you're chugging beer and smoking blunts in Lorraine's basement while you listen to Zeppelin, Morrison, Hendrix, the stuff your mom plays when she feels old, and for the first time all week you stop worrying how you bombed AP biology and how you missed the Berkeley deadline and what the hell you'll do about college, you don't have the dough for Stanford but damn if you'll go to San Jose State, and then Lorraine pulls you from the couch, so alive, warm, so smiley, and you pile into your Mercury and barrel down the street, windows down, the air smells like sea, the night goes forever.

The milk smell makes you nauseous. Your mom says, "Pity about Stacie, some drunk ran over her dog last night," and you remember the crunching sound when you took the corner at Beloit and Anderson, tires squealing.

