

# 2002 or 3

by Nonnie Augustine

She was petite, pear-shaped, white, the girlfriend of a friend who'd done his degree in Russian Literature, but that's not the only reason I liked him. The husband I had for a while traveled whether he needed to or not and so I'd go with Julie and Phillip to movies, plays, dinner. I was a bit older than Phillip and more than a bit older than Julie but really not all that old. Not the point, anyway. Anyway, Julie's hold on sensible living dissolved, Phillip told me. The piano sellers she sold pianos for and did the books for liked her too much to prosecute when she embezzled from them, but she had to pay them back and for quite some time Phillip helped her do this, but then he stopped because her spending habits only got worse and her debt overwhelmed them both, but it was her debt, not Phillip's after all, he wasn't a rich man after all, and he, overwhelmed, but still fond, more than fond, cut ties. Without his loans to help with the piano sellers, with the monumental renovation of the Baltimore row house she'd bought and all the disasters, each one a funny story they'd told over dinner back when we still went to dinner, without his affection, her spiral spun down too damn fast and he didn't know how fast or how down because, of course, he'd opted out, even though he still loved her, he told me. He told me on the way to her wake. Shocked and willing, I rode with him to Baltimore, less than an hour away from where I lived with dogs and cats and occasionally my husband, to face her angry, poorish, estranged family who might be blaming Phillip for Julie's profound undoing, but it was the Baltimore cops who killed her. She'd called 911 to say she was afraid she was going to kill herself. Four of them, all men as a matter of fact, came to her little house, saw her standing behind the vintage lace curtains she'd hung in the front room, the only room renovated after six years. Julie opened the door to their pounding, then backed away to the other side of the room. She was holding a knife so they shot her in the chest four times. One bullet from each cop. Other than a wake and a funeral there was no aftermath. Julie was armed with that kitchen

knife so she was shot and killed according to the policy of the Baltimore police, which was shoot to kill. Maybe it was suicide by cop, but even though Julie, in life, had done devious things, I didn't believe she would have been all that devious in death. I thought then, think now, she was murdered. I'm making a fictional story here because I can't remember dates, don't have the police records, haven't interviewed anyone. The mayor of Baltimore at the time wants to be our President or at least our Vice President. I can say that for a fact.

