

Antenna

by stephen hastings-king

She says: In the beginning the air was thick with signals about naming me Ann Tanner. But my parents never picked them up. She takes a drag from a cigarette.

She says: When I had braces, my family wired my headgear to rabbit-ears and shortwave radios to pull in distant signals. They'd put me in a chair, point me in the desired direction and indicate how I was to hold my head and the facial expression I was to make. Football games and military actions ran through my skull. Information tangled with static and filled me up.

The movements of smoke trail her features through spaces of expressionist light.

When I squint at her from across the table I can see the waveforms created by her carrier signal.

She says: I learned to control the overflow with tiny careful movements. I learned to fine tune, to locate channels inside of channels. Sometimes during a coup d'etat or evangelical broadcast unrelated pop songs would hover around my head. I knew each was playing just for me. I am antenna and receiver. Broadcasts search me out. They like my technologies.

She takes another drag from her cigarette.

The night-marsh seems crisscrossed with streams of faint chattering from telex machines. They inch closer, looking for her.

