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The End of an Era

Jeriann Watkins
Concordia University-Portland

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Love Has No Height, Love Has No Distance, Love Is Pure

Matthew Lai

The End of an Era

Jeriann Watkins

She feels its approach deep within her abdomen. The horsemen descend upon her, bursting into her life uninvited. Unwanted. Unstoppable.

Each carries his own unique weapon. The first inflicts blinding pain inside her head, inhibiting her ability to think clearly, or even at all.

The second causes her to curl into a ball, hugging her middle, begging for the pain to stop.

The third is the most gruesome. With his arrival comes uncontrollable bleeding—enough to cause pain and fatigue—but not enough to finish her off. The blood serves mostly as a distraction; it keeps her from being able to fight back.

As ghastly as the bloody horseman is, there is one more: the cruelest of them all. He rides in before the others and stays after they have gone. He forgoes physical affliction and delves straight into her mind, shuffling her emotions like a poker deck, occasionally even removing cards,
hiding them up his sleeve. He leaves her a jumbled mess, unsure of her own opinions, feelings.

There is only one thing she knows for sure; when these horsemen arrived with their monthly apocalypses, they ended her world as she knew it. But R.E.M. lied. She feels anything but fine.

Josie works as a babysitter on Saturday afternoons. The Johnsons hired her to care for Felix almost three years ago. She has never missed a Saturday. She has also never seen Felix. Every Saturday at one thirty, Tina and Greg leave in their blue Volvo dressed in their finest coats. Josie never has any idea what they are wearing underneath. She passes them in the doorway as she enters the stone foyer. She kicks her shoes off; the white wool carpet couldn’t take the abuse of her leaving them on. When the almost inaudible hum of the dealership maintained sedan fades down Third Avenue, Josie walks to the kitchen and starts boiling water for tea. The sound of the burner heating up is almost embarrassing as it breaks the silence. The rest of the enormous log house is motionless and mute.

Josie has explored every room and drawer of the house, every medicine cabinet. She knows that Greg has indigestion. Tina is depressed. She knows every corner of the house except for what is behind the pristine white door at the top of the stairs that holds a tiny sign that reads Felix. That door is never left ajar. It is locked she assumes. Greg had made it crystal clear that she should never disturb that room, never even touch the handle. He told her that he would know.

When the teapot whistled, she rushed to remove it from the heat. She always forgets that there is no one there to hear it, except for Felix that is, and he has never fussed about it before. While the tea bag is brewing, Josie always examines the fridge. There is an entire frosted glass shelf stacked with miniature jars of mashed up peaches and squash. The jars never move and are never replaced. Josie did a test one time. She dripped one small dot of blue nail polish on the bottom of a jar of pureed peas. That jar still sits in the front row on the far left.