

Halfway Out The Door

by Jennifer Donnell

She asks if I only write about men, which I tell her is redundant. I also answer, "Yes, but sometimes I write about them as race cars, hyenas, vaginas, or God."

She smirks like she wants to smile, but it's stuck halfway out her door. Her happiness hasn't passed go, while mine had a good time on Park Place, but it all feels mortgaged now.

Some people get mad the way I capitalize God. I often think I should capitalize Mother, Poetry, and Love, but then I might as well capitalize Ordinary.

She's got legs that went on forever, thirty years ago, and haven't come back. She has a mole above her knee and her hair is red like it won't be red once she washes it.

I'll be a good person when I see her as beautiful.

I offer her tea and she offers me crumpets. She tells me to follow my gut, when it comes to men, but whenever I do they stop liking me. Fueled with hybrid intuition, I tell the one I like most that he's uninvited to my birthday party because I had a nightmare he didn't bring a present. In response he gifts me a peppermint, like a duck lays an egg. Maybe I should have dreamt of two peppermints, so I could share one with her, looking so forlorn like she does, with that half smile, frowning.

She's pleased that I don't capitalize men, like it makes me a better feminist, not realizing that children who grew up without fathers never do. I lick the peppermint goodnight and spell out sweet dreams, as it's time I had some.

By morning, I find a second gift outside my door but only see it through the peephole. There might be boogeymen or secrets, there might lies. There might be secrets that turn into lies or truths that revert back to secrets. No wonder she doesn't smile. No wonder I only capitalize God.

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