

C O N F L A T E

by Molly Keegan Kuhn

She jumped into the hole the other day. The hole that sucks little girls into the universe, and doesn't return them.

I had to watch it.

I had to watch her sitting on the dock. Lean over, and fall in.

I couldn't have saved her.

Nor God. Or Jesus. Not the bridge.

The wooden bridge holding her body over the water.

Falsely advertising happiness and a safe place to watch the white curls of the water come in.

White sails of the boats visible underneath milky clouds, and a gray sun. And she was sitting there, smiling at me. Sticking her bright pink tongue out. Her little peachy legs dangling over the wood.

My mother put her in a little ruffled blouse, and a pink floral skirt.

She looked really cute.

I had to match her.

I didn't give a shit.

It was bright.

I was twelve.

She was five.

And they all thought I drowned her.

Why would I want to drown her?

You don't drown people, unless you're a psycho.

But I watched it happen.

You could hear the soft roar of salty sea run into the shore, then quickly dissolve back into the ocean. My dad was on his boat with my uncles, drinking away their liver, and cleverness. We listened to them shout, and irritably sing 1960 classics.

The ocean houses were neatly laid behind the dry sand. Perfect, pastel painted, vegetable growing, wealthy pastel, vegetable houses...neatly forming THE COASTAL FRONT neighborhood.

You can see the neighborhood from the boardwalk.

I like to watch the ladies who lay out in the sun. Collecting cancer, and dead skin.

My mother's one of them.

Skinny and slimy like a worm. Fake, and frosted in my ugly fathers prosperity.

She stands out there in her giant sunglasses, and high-fashion leopard dress.

My sister always foolishly waves to her.

My sister is an innocent freak. A mere child.

My minion. A slave to old men who give her perverted stares, and sly gestures of friendship.

I hate them all.

And I'd hate her, if she wasn't so damn adorable.

Anyways.

We were sitting on the boardwalk.

Watching the water, when we saw something extraordinary happen. Time started to change in the water. Places and events. Things that matter. Indian women dressed in beautifully adorned scarves. Small babies attached to their mothers hips. Deer and rabbits skipping across purple painted grass. Lightning bugs scattered, with rainbows, and waterfalls, and lyrical hums.

We bent over, and watched it all swirl together, as if someone was cooking soup in the ocean.

Nobody noticed but us.

They were all too stupid.

"Dad!" I called out, "Dad!"

But he didn't hear me over Janis Joplins voice.

"Mom!" I shrieked, "Mom!"

She waved from our backyard.

“What is that?” my sister asked, picking her nose.

“Don't pick your nose.”

She laughed, “No. What is that?”

We looked at the swirling galaxy.

“I don't know,” I declared, “I don't know what it is.”

She crawled onto my lap, “Touch it.”

“I'm not going to touch it.”

My eyes had the sun in them. My irises held blueberry bushes, and kaleidoscope patterns. Water trickling over rocks. Sun hitting the comfort of my brown bed, the cold floor I step on in the morning.

My mothers face. Her lips slightly opened, her eyes spread apart, and closed. Hair going everywhere.

Drawings and sculptures. I'd grow up to be a painter. They told me I couldn't.

That I wasn't brave enough. I'd meet people that would bend my wrist, and scar my skin. I'd meet boys that would only want me for filthy bones, and rotting corpses. I'd try to condemn them.

I could go out to lunch, and wipe off the table because it was left disgusting. I'd walk down the street, and gently brush against people walking in the opposite direction.

I could transcend space and time. Watch old films that lead me to believe love is real, and my body is too.

I couldn't believe in the truth. She shouldn't believe in it. But she would.

I turned to her, “I think its happiness. I think its fear. I think its dead fish, and ocean waves. I think it's left over pollution spills.”

“Oh,” she said.

The swirl started getting darker and darker, until it formed one concrete hole. Sitting right underneath our dangling feet.

I grabbed her waist, "I want you to go in there."
She didn't get it.
She didn't see what it was.
What it really was.
All she did was laugh, and smile.
"Nooooo," she pleaded.
But I was stronger.
Because I'm twelve.
So I pushed her into the hole, and it sucked her right in.

My mother didn't notice.
My father didn't notice. The neighborhood, the pigeons, the
tourists, the dock, the wood, Jesus, and the trees.
They didn't see her fall in.

Her future of growing and dying didn't suffice her. The ocean
attacked her. My dreams cupped into spoons that ate away at
worms, and insects. The buildings decayed. The churches lost their
spirit, and hope. And as she sang in the hole, her illuminations, and
body formed. Her body glowed with orbs, and stitches. A doll
dressed in a yellow dress. Slipping away to find existence in her new
atmosphere. And after the depths of the water consumed her, and
the yells of my father rang through my ears...and after the tears that
I cried desiccated with the passing of time, so did the hole.

It slithered. It spat out tangerines, and rocking chairs. It crawled
from the vents, and polluted the air. It turned around the record
players, and knocked the magnets off the fridge. It turned the sky
blue; it ate away at their hearts, and softened their bodies.

After time the hole went away. It melted back into the sand. And
the sand strung with the bones of my sister, washed onto shore. And
the little boys made castles out of her arms, and raised a flag with
her eyes.

They all thought I was crazy.

They all wanted me to be, because that's the only logical
explanation.

But it wasn't fiction. It wasn't a story, or a play, a chemical imbalance. I'm not possessed, or lost. Or jealous. Nor unloved, tormented, or strange.

When it's the only possible outcome. When it's the only reason ...When you believe in the hopeless and idealistic fate that devours each limb, the integrity, and the machines. The vulgar ridiculous path life chooses for you. We fall into gaps. Into space, into openings, breaks, the pores of the roses blooming in daylight...

And we do not dig ourselves out of them, disguise them, close them, leave them.

We bend over trying to accidentally move into them. We try to gently leap into them, but inevitably we fall.

