

Like Father

by Joani Reese

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The scent of sizzling bacon wakes me at two a.m. followed by the sound of a fridge door shutting and a pull top can fizzing open. Years ago, I'd shed the man who woke me like that. Over a decade of late nights and alcohol fueled anger, and still, sometimes some image or smell would click the panic button, and I'd find myself back in that night kitchen, anger making me crazy, pounding my fists against the heart of addiction. Visions of crushed Miller Lite cans and empty Percocet bottles tossed behind heavy blue draperies came flooding back, stuffed behind couch cushions, tossed under the bed. Thoughts of his black blood snoring through the next afternoon. His remorse, his apologies, all the banal wash, rinse, repeat. I slink downstairs barefoot, creeping step by step in search of this new ghostman haunting my kitchen, and there he is, our son, back turned to me, swaying over the burning meat, a can in hand, a six pack of empties lined up on the counter, hundreds more waiting for the boy turning into the man.

