

Traumata

Sarah Geekie

5 years old

"I'm nervous about kindergarten," she says, so soft the cat's ear doesn't even twitch.
Her dad tries to joke around.

"Do you think your teacher is going to be a moose? Or a duck?"

"No . . ."

She's not actually thinking about school, of course.

Is there a way to explain about the television show at grandma's? The gun shot and
the person fell over and they never spoke again.

Because they were dead.

Her heart starts racing.

*Everyone dies I'll die my family will die the cat will die we'll just be in the ground
forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and*

"Okay, I feel better. Good night."

The cat jumps down.

8 years old

All that is on television is Mass.

A man is talking about resurrection and tombs and heaven.

She doesn't mean to, but she jumps, just a little bit.

She has to go to the bathroom.

"Is this really bothering you?" her dad calls at her retreating back.

He sounds a little annoyed.

Easter morning is when she learns that digging her nails into her palms make tiny
red marks.

They're neat and clean. They almost look like the stitches on her brother's baseball.

She's fascinated.

She notices that her heart has stopped racing.

12 years old

Jessica brought a few movies to the sleepover.

"Let's watch *King Tut* first," Jessica nudges her.

"Ok."

But she doesn't want to watch *King Tut*. She doesn't want to watch a movie about mummies and embalming and sarcophaguses.

While they put on their pajamas, she tries not to think about it, she tries really hard, but her heart starts racing.

Before she can stop it, her mind flashes with *death the underworld Hades mummies forever buried in tombs forever and ever but*

"What's all those on your arms?" Jessica interrupts.

"Oh, my stupid cat," she says.

15 years old

"Are you ready?" her dad smiles.

"Yep!" she says, taking the keys from him.

"We can try the highway today," he says.

"Ok," she says, trying to sound casual, cool, not too excited.

Things have been better. High school is keeping her busy. She acts like a normal teenager. Homecoming is in a few weeks. Maybe she'll—

There's a raccoon, nearly flattened, in the middle of the road.

She swerves to avoid hitting it, like so many cars have done before her, but she ends up running over the end of its tail.

She's shaking. She feels like she's about to throw up. Her hands clutch tighter around the wheel and her knuckles turn white.

Her dad is looking straight ahead.

"Lots of road kill around this street," he says.

Then he looks at her.

“What’s the matter? There’s nothing to worry about.”

They end up cutting the driving lesson short.

She runs to her room, frustrated. A fucking raccoon can do this to her. A fucking raccoon has reminded her of what was on the news last night about those soldiers and about those facts she learned in Astronomy about the Big Bang and the Sun’s capacity to explode—

She locks her door and rolls up her shorts.

Her arms were way too obvious.

18 years old

She’s an adult now, according to the state.

She wonders how many adults still have to stand outside their dad’s room at night, sweaty and shaking, trying to calm down enough to return to their own bed.

21 years old

She looks down upon the green earth.

The cat climbs on the cloud, rubbing his furry face against the back of her hand.

Why was she ever afraid of this?

My name is Sarah Geekie, and I am a junior at Valparaiso University. I am an avid Harry Potter fan, a sweets addict, and a constant worrywart. In my free time, I enjoy reading novels, watching Arthur re-runs, and playing Nancy Drew games. I also like sleeping. I am an English major and music minor here at school, and I have found both music and creative writing has helped me conquer many things in my life. This is the first year that I have felt comfortable enough to submit some of my work, and I have no regrets that I did. I would like to congratulate the other authors and poets in *A Common Thread*, and I’m looking forward to reading your own stories.