

# NAKED

*Karen George*

They were going to a nudist camp. Jody held her breath as her boyfriend Monroe drove alongside Spruce Mountain toward a curve where the road disappeared. She knew he was a careful driver. In their two years together he'd handled the backroads of the seven states radiating out from their home state of Kentucky. As he maneuvered around the bend, another panorama spread out before them. The Bluestone River snaked through the valley where small farms nestled between thick forests and an occasional small town. She leaned her head out the window and inhaled the air, trees, and soil.

She followed their progress along the yellow-highlighted line Monroe had charted on the map in her lap. *Men and their maps*, she smiled to herself. They overflowed the drawers of his file cabinet. Anytime they stopped at a rest area, he gravitated to the maps. She smoothed her hand over the crisp folds. Roads, towns, rivers, mountains arranged on the grid with its legend illuminated. The

West Virginia mountains gave way to hills then flatlands on the way to the ocean. As the miles decreased between them and their destination, The Garden of Eden in Virginia, Jody wondered if her queasy feeling meant anticipation or nervousness. She'd wanted to experience nudism for years, but no one she knew had ever seemed interested. Until she met Monroe.

He wore his hole-in-one cap, inseparable from it since the achievement a month earlier. Jody surprised him by sewing a hole-in-one patch to the hat. She didn't share his love of golf, but listened to his play-by-play, happy for him. Wearing a hat, he looked younger than fifty. His light brown hair had receded until only a few wisps remained on top. He kept the sides and back trimmed short, making it appear thicker.

Monroe asked if she was getting excited. She answered yes, saying she felt a rush like you get when a plane lifts off the ground.

"So, you are nervous," he said.

She replied no, a little too fast. Monroe teased her about looking a little green, saying they could change their minds and go on to Virginia Beach and Jamestown instead. She smiled, slightly irritated at his suggestion that she might want to back out of their plans. Didn't he know by now she couldn't resist a dare? Hadn't she walked several nights with him nude through the

cemetery near their house, to get a taste of it? Wearing a wrap around dress with nothing beneath, clothes she could throw on at a moment's notice. She'd practiced in the gym's locker room, amazed at the rigmarole women, teens, and even girls as young as ten performed so no one saw them naked. It was only the youngest children who enjoyed running around the room bare-bottomed. Why were people so afraid of nakedness?

Jody's stomach lurched again, and for a second she wondered what morning sickness felt like, but quickly told herself she was not pregnant. At her annual gynecological visit in the spring, the doctor said her blood work showed her still pre-menopausal. Her periods had remained regular, until now. She smoothed her hand over her abdomen, and asked Monroe if it looked pouchy. He teased, asking if she meant more pouchy than normal. Jody smacked his leg, reminding him she didn't look that bad for forty. She tried not to let her mind wander to anything but the breathtaking view unfolding before them. She recognized white pine, pin oak, and shagbark hickory as the van climbed. Monroe pointed out hemlock, mulberry, balsam fir. He'd inherited the family landscape business. Everywhere they went he taught her how to identify various species. She'd always loved trees, but only knew the easy ones like sycamore, blue spruce, and maple.

Monroe caught her eye and winked. “You’re not still worried about being pregnant, are you?”

“No,” she lied.

“How late are you?”

“Three weeks.”

He asked why she hadn’t made a doctor’s appointment to find out before they left on vacation.

“Because I’m not pregnant.” She hadn’t meant her voice to sound so sharp.

Monroe kept his eyes on the road.

I am not going to let this ruin our trip, Jody told herself. She glanced at the van’s clock: 11:58. She’d allow herself the two minutes before noon to play out the what-ifs. What if she was pregnant? She couldn’t accept abortion or giving a child up for adoption. Monroe might choose to marry her. She loved him, but wasn’t sure she wanted to be married. They could continue to live together and raise their child or she could raise the child on her own. Surely she was capable, even if it wasn’t her plan. What she never anticipated might present the greatest joy.

Her time was up. As they approached another crest of the mountain road, she pulled the binoculars from the console compartment between them. They

topped the mountain and descended. Another valley spread out before them. So many shades of green. She couldn't wait to get in the woods, to ingest their opulence. The Garden of Eden contained a Jacuzzi, a lake, and was within twenty miles of the ocean. Anticipation flushed through her as she imagined herself nude, immersed in water.

Mountains stacked one behind the other on the horizon—purple, blue, and gray—beneath a sky striated by gold veins of sun breaking through. She took a deep breath, let go of all but the countryside. Was there anything as beautiful as wide open land? Monroe caught her gaze and grinned. She raised the binoculars to her eyes to cover pooling tears.

## §

Monroe stood inside the cabin, near its door. “Are you ready?”

Jody took a deep breath, and nodded. Naked, they stepped outside. The Blue Ridge Mountain breezes from the west and the Atlantic breezes from the east tickled her skin. Mature shade trees graced the campsites. Monroe pointed out loblolly pines, chestnut oaks, black willows. They passed several campsites where nude adults, teenagers, and children set up tents and pop-up campers, attended grills, and pitched horseshoes. They'd rubbed on sunscreen before

leaving the cabin, though from the look of clouds amassing, complements of tropical storm Allison, they wouldn't need it.

She couldn't believe she was finally walking around naked. She thought about the scar from her kidney stone surgery and the abundance of moles distributed over her body. In the small of her back a glazed area remained from the dark, furry mole the dermatologist removed when she was fifteen. She shivered, remembering the mole shaped, sized, and colored like a cockroach. As a young adult, she worried about how much her thighs jiggled when she walked in a bathing suit or shorts. Lord knows what all was jiggling now, she thought.

They headed for the Garden of Eden's office. Monroe stopped alongside a river birch, touching its cinnamon-red peeling bark. A sign "Welcome to the 2001 Eastern Naturist Gathering" hung on the door. A man stood behind the counter, striking keys on a computer. Jody assumed his bottom half was naked as his top, but couldn't verify it unless she leaned and peeked over the counter. He checked them in, gave them a map of the campground and hiking trails, went over the ground rules, and moved away from the counter to pull their meal tickets from a file cabinet. Yes, he was naked.

She kept her gaze straight ahead, telling herself she would not be embarrassed, trying not to smile. Above his coccyx bone there was an indentation where the skin shone as if a quarter hovered there. She fought the urge to giggle. When he turned back, she saw a long scar down his belly. Gall bladder surgery, she suspected, remembering her mother's similar scar. She moved her eyes level with his, seeing his privates peripherally. Again she struggled not to laugh, thinking how silly sexual organs looked.

Monroe wanted to see if they had any water floats for sale. Jody's nipples hardened when she passed an air-conditioning vent. She resisted covering herself with her arms. A young woman nearby was stocking shelves, her back to Jody. A lizard tattoo decorated one cheek, the other a snake, and a dragon above her tailbone. When she turned to them, Jody tried not to stare. The woman's belly protruded in a mound above her shaved privates. A spider tattoo webbed the top of one breast. Jody envied her radiant, unblemished complexion. Breakouts plagued her teenage and early adult years. No amount of makeup could cover the scars.

She reminded herself that she'd sworn off comparing herself to other women. Part of why she wanted to experience a nudist camp was to let go of any lingering concerns over her body image. Jody couldn't think of a single

female friend that could honestly deny they were still cursed with body image issues. How ridiculous, she thought, at her age to be struggling with what she looked like. For once and all, she wanted to be happy in her skin.

“Your first child?” Jody asked the woman, feeling her face redden.

“No, she has an older sister.” She extended her hand. “I’m Trillie.”

A naked tow-headed toddler came from behind the counter. “This is Morgan.”

The child had her mother’s silver-blond hair and light blue eyes. She patted Trillie’s belly.

“Do you have any children?” Trillie asked.

“No.” And don’t want any, Jody thought. She had been pregnant once, in her first year of marriage.

Monroe studied Jody’s face, trying to gauge her reaction, she suspected. He told the woman that this was Jody’s first time at a nudist camp. Trillie said she remembered her first time, that it was hard not to check out everyone’s parts. Don’t worry, she said, it’s a natural curiosity. People understand. They all had a first time.

As they left the office, Jody remembered the scene she’d walked into a week earlier. Her niece had invited her over to look at baby pictures. When



she hadn't answered the bell, Jody tried the door, and walked into the living room. Cara lay on the couch with her infant girl snuggled to her chest, both asleep. Their beauty took Jody's breath away. Tears filled her eyes as she listened to their breathing.

Monroe took her hand as they walked toward the pool. She tried not to wonder what it would be like to have a child. Certainly her life would be totally different. Would she be happier?

### §

The pool area was crowded. At one end a woman soaped herself at an open-air shower. An elderly man had skin so wrinkled it looked as if he wore clothes that had been bunched in a ball for years. Jody noticed a tan middle-aged man stretched out in a lawn chair with a bunched-up beach towel draped over his midsection. Monroe whispered that the man had a hard-on. Said it happened to him the first couple camps he visited. After a while you get used to seeing people naked, he said, and you don't even notice.

"Who you shitting?" Jody teased. "I saw the way you were checking out that blonde in the office. And don't say you were only interested in her tattoos."

Monroe smiled in reply.

Swimming naked felt natural and decadent. Churned-up water tickled between her legs when she lapped the pool. Monroe snuck up from behind and goosed her. She grabbed him underwater. Children, teens, and adults jumped off the spring board—breasts and penises bouncing. One man floated an infant boy on the water's surface. The child kicked his arms and legs. His squeals of delight reminded Jody of the sounds Monroe's grandson Thompson made when he was dragged down in a tickle-fest. The man and child had caught Monroe's eye as well. Did she imagine his jaw tighten? Was he hoping to God she wasn't pregnant?

Jody watched Monroe practice freestyle across the pool's width, struggling to breathe and keep his legs from sinking. They remained muscular from years of martial arts. Almost drowning when young, he carried a phobia of water into his adult life. Six months earlier, he'd completed adult swim lessons at a local high school. He'd made it a priority to see that his grandkids learned to swim at an early age. Jody had learned to swim at the age of five, competing in meets throughout her teen years into her mid-twenties. Until she miscarried.

## §

Before the "Naturist Photography in Nature" workshop began, Jody and Monroe signed release forms, stating they agreed to have their pictures taken and

possibly printed in The Naturist Society's monthly publication. The workshop consisted of ten men, Jody and another woman. The leader was a small man, beard tinged with gray. Thick dark hair covered much of his body. He would not meet Jody's eyes, stealing sideways glances at her and the other female. This one's trouble, Jody thought.

The leader said they'd better get to it. Looked like rain. "We'll warm up on the swing set."

Jody watched the other woman, who looked to be in her mid-thirties, arrange a towel on a swing before sitting. She pushed off and began pumping her legs. The leader shot pictures of her from various angles. The male participants moved forward, sluggish at first. When the woman smiled and opened her legs a little wider, the men gathered closer, as if drawn by a magnet. She had a Caesarian scar, and large, loose breasts. Throughout the years, Jody wished she had larger breasts, but felt conflicted, as if she were playing into the hands of those who assessed women by the size of their breasts. Silently she'd judged those who resorted to surgical augmentation.

Now for the woods, the leader said. As they walked, Jody pretended not to notice several men getting hard. The leader stopped in front of a large maple. Its trunk divided seven feet from the ground. He asked the younger woman to

climb up into the crook. Jody would have told the man to fuck himself. The woman stepped on rungs of wood nailed to the tree trunk, vestiges of a long-gone tree house. Several men steadied her with palms on her rump. She squealed. The leader snapped several photos of her climbing.

That's cheating," she cooed. "I wasn't ready." She positioned herself in the tree's fork.

The air felt clogged and heavy. No one spoke but the man in charge. "Okay now, strike your pose."

The woman leaned against one branch, her arm around it like the shoulder of a lover, her other arm behind her head. The position resulted in one breast squashed against the tree, the other riding high. Jody stood back a ways, thinking someone should tell the woman she looked deformed. The men circled below, clicking away. Monroe stood back, not too close to the clump of men, but not too far away. Jody's face felt hot, her underarms wet.

They helped the woman down. Jody followed the pack onto the lawn in front of the clubhouse. The leader instructed the woman to get down on all fours and do whatever felt natural. Jody wanted to gag.

The leader lay down on the grass and took side shots of the woman. Her breasts hung like sacks of apples. She arched her back, raising her ass. The

other men moved in, jockeying for position. Monroe stood at the back, camera raised to his face. Jody wanted to yank him away.

She left, moving as fast as she could. When she reached the gravel road that wove through the campground, she dug her shoes in. By the time Monroe caught up with her, she'd stomped all the way to the woods at the far end of the campground, working out most of the tightness from her legs and spine. He fell into step with her, not speaking. It had begun drizzling.

"All done with your class?" she asked, as if truly interested.

"Pretty much." He brushed his hand against hers, testing the water. When she didn't pull away, he took her hand. "What did you expect? Did you think we were going to just photograph nature?"

"No. The poster stated clearly it would be naturist photography in natural settings. But it shifted quickly to being sexual and exploitive."

"That woman knew exactly what she was doing," Monroe said, "And exactly what the men were doing. No one took advantage of her. That was the most attention she'll probably get in her lifetime. She ate it up."

"That's beside the point. Those men acted as if they were honing their photographic skills, and all the while they were getting off on it. And you said naturism wasn't about sex or perversion."

“It’s not supposed to be,” Monroe said. “But people are human.”

“And you were in that pack of drooling idiots snapping away.”

“Okay, hey, it’s a guy thing. If it makes you feel any better, I didn’t take any pictures of her. I only pretended to.”

“Why?” Jody asked. “Scared to walk away?” She snapped her towel and landed a solid slap to his ass. He rubbed it, pretending it didn’t hurt.

“What I want to know is why they assumed it had to be women posing for men, and of course they were only interested in the female with the biggest bazooms.”

“So you’re really mad because they weren’t taking pictures of you?”

“No, if that pervert asked me to pose, I’d suggest someone take a shot of me ramming his camera up his ass.” Jody couldn’t believe the venom in her voice, or the intensity with which she wanted to kick something.

Monroe began to laugh, but turned it into a cough. After walking for a while more, he suggested they not let one jerk spoil their fun. They entered the trailhead of the “Full Moon Trail,” joking about the aptness of its name. Monroe picked a blue berry from a red cedar, showing her its waxy covering. He brushed his fingers through the cedar needles, wafting the fragrance under her nose. They enjoyed several slow kisses beneath the canopy of trees.

He pointed to the green fruit of a pawpaw tree, saying raccoons, opossums, and squirrels ate them. Picking up one of its ten-inch oval leaves, he told her he'd read they were the sole food source for caterpillars of zebra swallowtail butterflies. His deep, yet tender voice reminded her of the time he'd shown his grandson how to identify tulip-poplars while on a fall hike at Burlington Bluffs. The four-lobed leaf, he'd explained, looked like a person's body—the two upper lobes the arms, the two lower the legs.

### §

When a downpour started, they hurried for their cabin. The rain beat an entrancing staccato on its tin roof. They wrapped their arms around each other, and rolled back and forth on the bed, laughing. They woke from a post-love-making nap, made a picnic on top of the bedspread. Pulling out food from the small refrigerator and their coolers, they fed each other grapes, strawberries, blueberries, almonds, pistachios, and cubes of sharp Cheddar between sips of Chardonnay. The rain continued to ding the roof.

They read for a while in bed—him Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, her Barbara Kingsolver's *The Prodigal Summer*. Their bedside window ajar allowed them to hear the crisp sound of raindrops on leaves, bark, and grass.

When Monroe hugged her, Jody's breasts felt tender. A wave of heat and nausea spread through her. She couldn't shake the idea that it might be morning sickness.

"What if I'm pregnant?"

He laid his book aside and re-arranged the pillows against the headboard.

"I am not having a child. I'm forty years old." She hugged her knees to her chest.

"It's risky to have a child at my age. And what teenager wouldn't be embarrassed by a mother in her fifties?" She struggled to keep her voice calm.

"They might keep you young."

Jody noticed he didn't say a child might keep "them" young. She dug her heels into the bed. "Do you want to become a father again at the age of fifty?"

"Why are you yelling at me?"

"You better not have got me pregnant. I'm not ready for a child."

"This would be a very small world if people waited until they were ready. You'd do fine."

Again, no mention of helping her. Surely, if she was pregnant, he'd accept his part of the responsibility. But what fifty year old man wants to begin raising a child?



## §

“I need some exercise after all that food,” Jody said. “We’ve been lying around like slugs.”

Monroe followed her outside. The soft drizzle tickled her skin. The dregs of dusk gave way to darkness as they walked. Jody’s favorite time of day. Sounds magnified and the air felt liquid thick with anticipation. Despite the camp’s sand base, water pooled everywhere, ankle-deep in some places. Some of the tent campers, beaten-down looks on their faces, pulled up stakes, packed waterlogged equipment, and headed for home.

The Jacuzzi was deserted. They slipped into its water. The drizzle turned into another downpour, beating the tin roof overhead. Monroe positioned himself so that a water jet hit the small of his back, one of his trouble spots. He asked how Jody was enjoying their naked vacation so far.

“I love it,” she replied. “I knew I would. I’ve been waiting years to do this. I had no idea how any different varieties of breasts there were. And nipples—tiny, large, flat, some like plump raisins. And penises. It’s a smorgasbord.”

When she’d turned forty, she’d decided to devote the rest of her life to having fun. She’d enjoyed a twenty year career as a computer technician. Her plan was to coast through the next fifteen years, and retire at fifty-five. She’d

probably work part-time at a bookstore, florist shop, or travel agency to augment her pension, so she could travel.

They scooted onto the rim of the Jacuzzi to cool off awhile. Jody tickled her fingertips over the age spots on his palm. He pressed a soft kiss against the inside of her wrist.

Other men filtered in. Brief exchanges ensued, not more than a few sentences—inquiring where they lived, what other nudist camps they'd visited. Four men besides Monroe, their age range from early forties to late fifties. After their second cool down, Jody and Monroe slid back in.

A woman in her early thirties joined them. A small baby slept in a Snuggly against her chest. The woman sat on the Jacuzzi step, only her lower torso submerged. Her auburn hair, long and thick, fell in perfect waves onto her shoulders. Jody wondered if she could get away with growing her hair long again. She'd worn it short for the past ten years, even with the bottom of her earlobes. Might be time for a change. Maybe she'd even dye her hair red. She already had natural strawberry-blonde highlights.

Jody wanted to ask about her baby, but didn't want to disturb them. The woman wrapped her arms around the baby and closed her eyes. They seemed

sealed in a separate, self-sufficient world like a kangaroo's pouch. She wondered if the woman was a single parent, or the child adopted. Surely she couldn't have given birth a few months ago. Not an ounce of fat remained on her body or a single spider vein on her thighs. Jody had several near each knee. They weren't painful, only unsightly. Several friends underwent a simple procedure where a doctor injected a solution into the veins to collapse them. Eventually they faded from sight. Jody hadn't decided how she felt about all the ways to camouflage a person's age.

She chided herself for comparing herself to the woman, assessing them both against some scale of perfection. When would she and the whole damned world break out of this mold of judging women by their appearance? This nude vacation was supposed to be her last step in letting go of such betrayals.

They'd been in the hot water way too long. Monroe looked red.

"Your face looks like it's going to explode," Jody said. "We better get out. This might be too much for a man your age," she teased, close so only he could hear.

He flipped her off behind his towel, winking.

Passing one of the campsites, they saw a father, under a dining tarp, show his son how to light a kerosene lamp. Jody was reminded of the time she

watched Monroe show his granddaughter Kelsey how to plant tomato seedlings. His deep voice softened, intent on describing in simple terms how to make sure the dirt in the pot remained level with the ground soil, how to carefully tamp the soil around the plant's base, and how to water them so that you didn't flood them. He'd let Kelsey try one, guiding her every step of the way. Jody wondered if Monroe had been as patient a father.

### §

They discovered a mud fight in an open field next to the lodge. Kids, teenagers, and adults on their knees in a mid-calf deep lake slung handfuls of mud at others streaking past. They looked like pied horses, mud-splotched head to foot, pinkish skin showing through here and there. Floodlights extended shadows, giving everything a surreal look.

"Want to join them?" Jody asked Monroe, only half kidding.

They removed their soggy sandals and found a spot where the ground felt especially gooshy. Dropping to their knees, side by side, they dug fingers into the field's soft underbelly, packed mud into some semblance of a sphere before flinging it at the nearest target.

A group ran up and down the field, screeching as through a gauntlet, daring anyone to catch them with mud balls. It didn't take long to deplete a spot

of pliable mud, forcing them to find another cache. The skin beneath Jody's nails became increasingly tender from gouging holes in the earth. Their bellies hurt from laughing at themselves squatting naked, playing in mud.

"There's your friend," Monroe whispered.

The man who led the photography workshop headed their way.

"Let's see if I can find some hard-packed clay," Jody said. "To knock him upside the head with."

"What, you don't want to go for his balls?" Monroe asked.

A mud ball smacked Jody's cheek, splattering mud into one eye. She hadn't seen it coming. A woman handed her a towel to wipe the mud off her face. Monroe helped her to the outdoor shower, where she rinsed out her eye until the stinging lessened. A cloudburst started, stinging their skin. They ran for the cabin.

"Is it ever going to quit raining?" Jody unfolded a map on top of the bed. "Virginia is a big state. There has to be somewhere we can go where it isn't raining."

Monroe suggested they wait until morning. Usually she liked the sound of rain on a tin roof, but it had turned into an annoying, inescapable din. She tried to dry herself with one of her sweatshirts. Towels in various stages of

wetness hung over chair backs, coolers, refrigerator top, empty boxes, and the door handle.

“What’s going on?” Monroe asked.

“I don’t know,” Jody said. “I’m just out of sorts. I can’t stand how damp everything feels. There’s nothing left to dry off with.” She hated how petty her voice sounded.

He took her hand. “Let’s get some sleep before we decide anything.”

She curled up on her side against Monroe. Despite his warmth, she couldn’t relax enough to fall asleep. After fifteen minutes, she released an exaggerated sigh. Monroe sat up in bed and switched on a light. “Something besides the rain’s bothering you.”

“I’m not having a child. I’d be a terrible mother. I’ve already proven that.”

“What are you talking about?”

Jody explained how she’d qualified in breaststroke at a nationwide Marlin’s swim meet twenty years ago. She was pregnant, eight weeks along, not showing yet. She’d wanted to swim in one last competition, sure nothing would happen to the baby. Her chances to win the gold medal were the best ever. She’d been swimming all her life.

Her voice broke when she told Briar that her baby miscarried the next morning.

Monroe smoothed his palm down her back as if brushing away the memory. "It might not have had anything to do with you losing the baby."

"But I was so damn selfish to take the risk."

"Maybe you did act irresponsibly; but my God, you were young. You still don't know for sure you're to blame." He soothed his palm over her shoulders.

"That isn't the end of it." She admitted never telling her husband she was pregnant, so she never told him she lost the baby either.

Monroe said nothing. Silence hung heavy as mildew.

She'd realized her husband had a right to know, but told herself that what he didn't know wouldn't hurt him. Afraid and ashamed, she'd started taking birth control pills. One secret led to another. Her shame escalated. Her husband assumed they were working on starting a family.

Monroe's hand pressed against her shoulder blade. Or was he pushing her away? After a while, he whispered, "Don't you think it's time you let that go?"

"I thought I had, until my period was late."

"Maybe this is your second chance."

"I don't want one."

The memory returned of the infant curled in sleep on her niece's chest. Again she wondered what it would feel like to be a mother. She believed she'd resolved the issue years ago. A therapist told her she needed to grieve for her lost child and for not fulfilling her body's imperative to conceive. She'd wanted to scream, *Shouldn't that be a choice?*

Jody had finally told her husband she didn't want children, but by that time the marriage was in jeopardy for other reasons. Would children have grounded them, made them try harder to save their marriage? Kendal was a good man. Would have made a good father. And Monroe?

As she cried, Monroe fit his body against hers, enfolded her like a cocoon. "Jody, I'll help you if you're pregnant. Surely you know that." He kissed the crown of her head, nuzzled the nape of her neck.

She tasted the salt of her tears. After a time, she became aware their breaths had synchronized. She said, "Let's get out of here. I want to see the ocean."

They packed, putting everything wet in garbage bags. For the first time in days, they put on clothes. Jody noticed how comforting they felt, dry and soft.

Monroe tickled his fingers through the hair along her neckline. "I'll back the van closer, and open the back doors, so you won't get as wet."



As Jody heaved the strap of her duffel bag over her shoulder, she felt the sudden surge she'd hoped for—the unmistakable rush of blood. Worry drained from her, but in its place an ache of loss blossomed.

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KAREN GEORGE is author of three poetry collections from Dos Madres Press: *Swim Your Way Back* (2014), *A Map and One Year* (2018), and *Where Wind Tastes Like Pears* (2021). She won *Slippery Elm's* 2022 Poetry Contest, and her short story collection, *How We Fracture*, which contains the short story "Naked," won the Rosemary Daniell Fiction Prize, and is forthcoming from Minerva Rising Press in Spring 2023. Her prose appears in *Adirondack Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Atticus Review*, *NonBinary Review*, and *Still: The Journal*. Her website is: <https://karenlgeorge.blogspot.com/>.