SHORT STORY NIGHT

KRISTIN TENOR LIVE AND IN-PERSON!

JOIN LOCAL AUTHOR

Kristin Tenor FOR Flash Fiction Bonanza!

PLUS MORE FROM:

Raymon Carver, Grace Paley, and many others!

Read these stories and join Neenah Public Library staff at Lion's Tail Brewing
Monday, May 12th at 7:00 pm
for a one-hour discussion featuring trivia, laughs, and other surprises.
21 and older.

Pancakes

Kristin Tenor

She doesn't know why her mother walked barefoot to the neighbor's pond that day or why she set the rowboat adrift or why she lay in the bottom of it dressed in her blue terrycloth bathrobe with an anchor tied around her slim, white ankle like a string tethered to a runaway kite. She wonders how long she waited for the sun to rise or if she instead stared intently at a hawk floating in wide, lazy circles above her. She also wonders why her father didn't run after her, why he stayed behind to make pancakes while she and Lucie wailed along with Patsy Cline singing "Crazy" over the turquoise AM radio plugged into the wall beside the percolating coffee pot and two empty mugs sitting side by side with their handles pointed away from one another. She doesn't know why they didn't ask where their mother had gone so early on a Sunday morning or why they hadn't been told to change into their dresses and Mary Janes so they wouldn't be late for the 8:15 service at Old St. Joe's. She doesn't know why they didn't miss her. Maybe they were too caught up watching their father flip pancakes into the air, higher and higher, like a carnival performer. They ran around the kitchen, holding their plates, trying to keep the perfect cakes from hitting the tacky linoleum floor, where their father's mangy coonhound, Melchizedek, would surely ravage them whole. She and Lucie may only have been six and seven, but they knew how gravity worked.

Originally published in Wigleaf.

Gregor Mendel Never Knew My Father

by Kristin Tenor

Mr. Chavez stands in front of the classroom and talks about peas. Green peas, yellow peas, wrinkled peas, smooth-as-Mr. Chavez's-bald head peas. He says when two different varieties are sown together under a blanket of dark, loamy soil, they sometimes yield plants with pods containing green and wrinkled peas or yellow and smooth or maybe they'll come out the same shade of chartreuse as the faded bridesmaid's dress hidden in the back of your mother's closet, the one she wore the night she met your father and got drunk on wild dandelion wine for the first time and conceived you, although she'll never in a million years say so. You can tell just fine by the way her fingers wrap themselves around the hanger as she keeps shoving it further and further back until it's pressed tight against the wall.

This is How They Mourn

emergeliteraryjournal.com/this-is-how-they-mourn/

February 6, 2021

by Kristin Tenor

Our family will always remember the summer I turned fifteen as the drowning summer—first my cousin, Joey, then my brother, Danny. One accidental, one trying to be the hero. After the funeral, Nana and the aunties hover over the stove to fry kielbasas and sauerkraut, their tatted handkerchiefs tucked into the waistbands of their dark skirts. The men gather around the heavy wooden table to play Sheepshead and pass around a bottle of Jameson's so, as Papa Frank says, they can appropriately toast their dead. Cousins steal cookies and lemon bars dusted with confectioner's sugar from the doily-lined tray on the sideboard before escaping to the backyard to swap snippets of overheard gossip collected behind thin-papered walls and heating vents. It's as though they all expect Joey and Danny to burst through the screen door at any moment, both of them laughing, grabbing over one another for food, sustenance. This is how they mourn.

I stand next to my mother dressed in my new black dress and the kitten heels that pinch my pinkie toes until they become raw blisters. Neighbors and guests crowd into the front hallway with roasters of German potato salad and steaming casseroles covered with aluminum foil. The women from St. John's Ladies Auxiliary come bearing an array of pastel Jell-O salads, their tiers wobbling back and forth as they are passed from hand to hand. One woman with bright red lipstick pats my cheek as she presents my mother an oblong platter with a gelatinous lime-green fish at its center. The pears and mandarin oranges submerged within its translucent layers remind me of boys floating in the St. Croix River.

Mother, the ever-gracious host, pastes on a smile and thanks the ladies for "thinking of our family in our time of need," although just last night I saw her slip out of the house in her nightgown to lie on the damp grass under the full moon, her arms and legs tucked tight against her chest like the baby sparrow I once found buried inside it's brown-speckled shell even though part of it had already cracked and fallen away.

The aroma of burning cabbage and sickly-sweet pastries deep-fried in oil cause my stomach to flip over and over again. I excuse myself and hide behind the locked bathroom door. A slight breeze billows the sheer curtains covering the lower half of the window by the toilet. The fresh air still not enough to erase the heaviness clinging to every surface.

I take off my shoes and lie fully-clothed in the empty clawfoot tub. The porcelain cools my skin, the nape of my neck. Outside the window I hear my cousin, Greta, tell the others Danny was lucky he didn't live to see the sorrow he'd caused Auntie Miriam and Uncle George, since he was the one who dared Joey to swim toward the rip current in the first place. My other cousin, Bethany, says she heard the boys were trying to impress a girl. Neither is true.

Laughter erupts from the kitchen. The card game becoming more raucous with each drink poured. I close my eyes and imagine what it must be like to have waves pound against flesh, the taste of seaweed and fish swish through your mouth as you gasp for air until the only thing left is the final echo of your pulse completing the circuit—ear, head, heart—and all goes so utterly black.

Joey, Danny, and I are on the beach. The boys run toward the water's edge, pushing one another into the waves. They strip off their shirts and dive in, their heads bobbing up and down as they swim further and further out. I sit on a piece of forgotten driftwood, sifting through the smooth, round stones stacked at my feet. I balance one stone on top of the other building a tiny temple until it topples over and I start again. Seagulls dip and screech overhead. The sun is bright, blinding. I never hear them call my name.

Someone pounds on the bathroom door, jostling the handle. "Anyone in here?"

I stand in front of the mirror. I put on a fresh coat of lip gloss, straighten my dress, my hair. An accordion begins to play. Nana announces the cake has been cut. Heavy hands slap cards against the wooden table. More sausages hit the frying pan and my feet are stuck in sand.

Kristin Tenor lives in Wisconsin with her husband and is the flash fiction editor at *CRAFT*. Her work has appeared in *Midwest Review*, *Spelk*, *Bending Genres*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, and elsewhere. *Emerge Literary Journal* nominated Kristin's flash fiction piece, "Pruning Season," for Best of the Net 2020. More at www.kristintenor.com or Twitter @KristinTenor.

RAYMOND CARVER (1938–1988)

Born in 1938 in Clatskanie, Oregon, to working-class parents, Carver grew up in Yakima, Washington, was educated at Humboldt State College in California, and did graduate work at the University of Iowa. He married at age nineteen and during his college years worked at a series of low-paying jobs to help support his family. These difficult years eventually ended in divorce. He taught at a number of universities, among them the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Iowa, the University of Texas at El Paso, and Syracuse University. Carver's collections of stories include *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976), *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), from which "Popular Mechanics" is taken, *Cathedral* (1984), and *Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories* (1988). Though extremely brief, "Popular Mechanics" describes a stark domestic situation with a startling conclusion.

Popular Mechanics

1981

Early that day the weather turned and the snow was melting into dirty water. Streaks of it ran down from the little shoulder-high window that faced the backyard. Cars slushed by on the street outside, where it was getting dark. But it was getting dark on the inside too.

He was in the bedroom pushing clothes into a suitcase when she came to the door.

I'm glad you're leaving! I'm glad you're leaving! she said. Do you hear?

He kept on putting his things into the suitcase.

Son of a bitch! I'm so glad you're leaving! She began to cry. You can't even look me in the face, can you?

Then she noticed the baby's picture on the bed and picked it up.

He looked at her and she wiped her eyes and stared at him before turning and going back to the living room.

Bring that back, he said.

Just get your things and get out, she said.

He did not answer. He fastened the suitcase, put on his coat, looked around the bedroom before turning off the light. Then he went out to the living room.

She stood in the doorway of the little kitchen, holding the baby.

I want the baby, he said.

Are you crazy?

No, but I want the baby. I'll get someone to come by for his things.

You're not touching this baby, she said.

The baby had begun to cry and she uncovered the blanket from around his head.

Oh, oh, she said, looking at the baby.

He moved toward her.

For God's sake! she said. She took a step back into the kitchen.

I want the baby.

Get out of here!

She turned and tried to hold the baby over in a corner behind the stove.

But he came up. He reached across the stove and tightened his hands on the baby.

Let go of him, he said.

Get away, get away! she cried.

The baby was red-faced and screaming. In the scuffle they knocked down a flowerpot that hung behind the stove.

He crowded her into the wall then, trying to break her grip. He held on to the baby and pushed with all his weight.

Let go of him, he said.

Don't, she said. You're hurting the baby, she said.

I'm not hurting the baby, he said.

The kitchen window gave no light. In the near-dark he worked on her fisted fingers with one hand and with the other hand he gripped the screaming baby up under an arm near the shoulder.

She felt her fingers being forced open. She felt the baby going from her.

No! she screamed just as her hands came loose.

She would have it, this baby. She grabbed for the baby's other arm. She caught the baby around the wrist and leaned back.

But he would not let go. He felt the baby slipping out of his hands and he pulled back very hard.

In this manner, the issue was decided.

Considerations for Critical Thinking and Writing

1. Though there is little description of the setting in this story, how do the few details that are provided help to establish the tone?
2. How do small actions take on larger significance in the story? Consider the woman picking up the baby's picture and the knocked-down flowerpot.
3. Why is this couple splitting up? Do we know? Does it matter? Explain your response.
4. Discuss the title of the story. The original title was "Mine." Which do you think is more effective?
5. What is the conflict? How is it resolved?
6. Discuss the last line. What is the "issue" that is "decided"?

In a Tub – by Amy Hempel

March 25, 2020

My heart – I thought it stopped. So I got in my car and headed for God. I passed two churches with cars parked in front. Then I stopped at the third because no one else had. It was early afternoon, the middle of the week. I chose a pew in the center of the rows. Episcopal or Methodist, it didn't make any difference. It was as quiet as a church. I thought about the feeling of the long missed beat, and the tumble of the next ones as they rushed to fill the space. I sat there – in the high brace of quiet and stained glass – and I listened.

At the back of my house I can stand in the light from the sliding glass door and look out onto the deck. The deck is planted with marguerites and succulents in red clay pots. One of the pots is empty. It is shallow and broad, and filled with water like a birdbath.

My cat takes naps in the windowbox. Her gray chin is powdered with the iridescent dust from butterfly wings. If I tap on the glass, the cat will not look up. The sound that I make is not food.

When I was a girl I sneaked out at night. I pressed myself to hedges and fitted the shadows of trees. I went to a construction site near the lake. I took a concrete-mixing tub, slid it to the shore, and sat down inside it like a saucer. I would push off from the sand with one stolen oar and float, hearing nothing, for hours.

The birdbath is shaped like that tub.

I look at my nails in the harsh bathroom light. The scare will appear as a ripple at the base. It will take a couple of weeks to see.

I lock the door and run a tub of water.

Most of the time you don't really hear it. A pulse is a thing that you feel. Even if you are somewhat quiet. Sometimes you hear it through the pillow at night. But I know that there is a place where you can hear it even better than that. Here is what you do. You ease yourself into a tub of water, you ease yourself down. You lie back and wait for the ripples to smooth away. Then you take a deep breath, and slide your head under, and listen for the playfulness of your heart.

From 'Reasons to Live' by Amy Hempel

“Sing to It” ‹ Literary Hub

lithub.com/sing-to-it/

March 26, 2019

The following is the eponymous story from Amy Hempel's collection Sing to It*. Amy Hempel is the author of several books and editor of* Unleashed*. Her stories have appeared in* Harper’s, Vanity Fair, GQ, Tin House, *and others and have been widely anthologized, including in* Best American Short Stories *and* The Best Nonrequired Reading*. She teaches at Bennington College and Stony Brook Southampton.*

At the end, he said, No metaphors! Nothing is like anything else. Except he said to me before he said that, Make your hands a hammock for me. So there was one.

He said, Not even the rain—he quoted the poet—not even the rain has such small hands. So there was another.

At the end, I wanted to comfort him. But what I said was, Sing to it. The Arab proverb: When danger approaches, sing to it.

Except I said to him before I said that, No metaphors! No one is like anyone else. And he said, Please.

So—at the end, I made my hands a hammock for him. My arms the trees.

Wants

electricliterature.com/wants-grace-paley/

October 15, 2014

by Grace Paley, recommended by Dani Shapiro

I saw my ex-husband in the street. I was sitting on the steps of the new library.

Hello, my life, I said. We had once been married for twenty-seven years, so I felt justified.

He said, What? What life? No life of mine.

I said, O.K. I don't argue when there's real disagreement. I got up and went into the library to see how much I owed them.

The librarian said $32 even and you've owed it for eighteen years. I didn't deny anything. Because I don't understand how time passes. I have had those books. I have often thought of them. The library is only two blocks away.

My ex-husband followed me to the Books Returned desk. He interrupted the librarian, who had more to tell. In many ways, he said, as I look back, I attribute the dissolution of our marriage to the fact that you never invited the Bertrams to dinner.

That's possible, I said. But really, if you remember: first, my father was sick that Friday, then the children were born, then I had those Tuesday-night meetings, then the war began. Then we didn't seem to know them any more. But you're right. I should have had them to dinner.

I gave the librarian a check for $32. Immediately she trusted me, put my past behind her, wiped the record clean, which is just what most other municipal and/or state bureaucracies will not do.

I checked out the two Edith Wharton books I had just returned because I'd read them so long ago and they are more apropos now than ever. They were *The House of Mirth* and *The Children*, which is about how life in the United States in New York changed in twenty-seven years fifty years ago.

A nice thing I do remember is breakfast, my ex-husband said. I was surprised. All we ever had was coffee. Then I remembered there was a hole in the back of the kitchen closet which opened into the apartment next door. There, they always ate sugar-cured smoked bacon. It gave us a very grand feeling about breakfast, but we never got stuffed and sluggish.

That was when we were poor, I said.

When were we ever rich? he asked.

Oh, as time went on, as our responsibilities increased, we didn't go in need. You took adequate financial care, I reminded him. The children went to camp four weeks a year and in decent ponchos with sleeping bags and boots, just like everyone else. They looked very nice. Our place was warm in winter, and we had nice red pillows and things.

I wanted a sailboat, he said. But you didn't want anything.

Don't be bitter, I said. It's never too late.

No, he said with a great deal of bitterness. I may get a sailboat. As a matter of fact I have money down on an eighteen-foot two-rigger. I'm doing well this year and can look forward to better. But as for you, it's too late. You'll always want nothing.

He had had a habit throughout the twenty-seven years of making a narrow remark which, like a plumber's snake, could work its way through the ear down the throat, half-way to my heart. He would then disappear, leaving me choking with equipment. What I mean is, I sat down on the library steps and he went away.

I looked through *The House of Mirth*, but lost interest. I felt extremely accused. Now, it's true, I'm short of requests and absolute requirements. But I do want *something*.

I want, for instance, to be a different person. I want to be the woman who brings these two books back in two weeks. I want to be the effective citizen who changes the school system and addresses the Board of Estimate on the troubles of this dear urban center.

I *had* promised my children to end the war before they grew up.

I wanted to have been married forever to one person, my ex-husband or my present one. Either has enough character for a whole life, which as it turns out is really not such a long time. You couldn't exhaust either man's qualities or get under the rock of his reasons in one short life.

Just this morning I looked out the window to watch the street for a while and saw that the little sycamores the city had dreamily planted a couple of years before the kids were born had come that day to the prime of their lives.

Well! I decided to bring those two books back to the library. Which proves that when a person or an event comes along to jolt or appraise me I *can* take some appropriate action, although I am better known for my hospitable remarks.

My Son, in a Box – swamp pink

My Son, in a Box

Teddy Engs | Flash Fiction

Today my son will enter a glass box. The box is eight feet by eight feet, hanging from the mouth of a hydraulic crane. When the wind blows, the box sways, but we've been assured that it is secure. My son is not interested in danger for the sake of danger, he says, he is interested, simply, in the challenge. Once in the box he will subsist off a liter of water and a single strip of bacon per day. He will relieve himself into a bucket, which will be removed discreetly by an attendant while he sleeps. Aside from the bucket my son will bring nothing into the box. My son will be entirely nude. My son does not know how long he will remain in the box, but this morning at breakfast he supposed that it would be "a while." My son is prone to bouts of indifference, but I suspect, deep down, that he is proud.

In anticipation of the event, numerous media personnel have traveled to my door to ask me the same question: *Why is your son entering the glass box?* At first I responded as truthfully as possible, claiming that people, specifically young people, will go to extreme lengths to imbue their lives with meaning, and that I understood my son's desire to enter the box as one such meaning-making method. When asked about my own acts of extremity as a young man, I admitted that during my college years I was known to indulge in libation, but the questions continued and my responses were molded until the headlines read, "FATHER'S DRINKING FORCES SON TO EXTREME LENGTHS." Initially I was appalled by the deceit, the manipulation, but then I began to see the essence of their questions, the question behind the questions, which was something like: *What have you done to your son to cause him to want to live in a glass box?* They were hungry for a deprived childhood, the specifics of paternal outlash, but what they were looking for was a generation behind me. I have parented my son with unbridled tenderness and, if anything, a too-subdued disposition. When my son informed me of his intentions with the glass box I placed my hand lightly on his shoulder and said, "I am here to support you in all of your pursuits." My son shrugged my embrace and responded, "Now let's not get too touchy, pops." I sometimes wonder if paternal over-tenderness is at the root of my son's extreme behavior, but then I imagine how my father would have responded if, at my son's age, I had informed him that I wanted to live in a glass box, and I feel reaffirmed in my err on the side of tenderness approach to fatherhood.

A small crowd has gathered in Liberty Plaza, but it is nothing compared to the hysteria that accompanied my son's announcement of his exhibition. The news vans that lined our quiet street, the badgering journalists—they are nowhere to be seen. Today there is a single

cameraman, sans reporter, and a small group of my son's supporters wielding homemade signs. Outside of that, only lunching day laborers and incidental passersby stop to examine the spectacle. I am standing beside my son, assisting him through his pre-box stretching routine, when my father arrives. My father is supportive of my son's endeavors in a way he never was towards my own. I cannot decide whether this is malicious or conciliatory.

"Dad."

"Son."

"Hi Grandpa."

"Hey kiddo."

The crane rumbles to life, lowering the box in jerky, mechanical plunges. My son exhales audibly, then turns to me and says, "It's time."

"Your mother would be proud," I say, although I'm not sure it's true. Actually, I'm certain it's not—my wife was a cautious woman, cautious to the point of debilitating hypochondria, and died of complications brought on by improper and over-medication for what she believed to be the early onset symptoms of stoneman syndrome, one of the world's rarest diseases.

My son nods, then descends into the plaza.

"Proud?" my father asks.

"Deeply," I say.

"How'd he put this thing on, anyways?"

"He did it all himself, obtained the permits, everything."

My father bends over, hocks phlegm between his feet. "I lived in a box once."

"You did?"

"Nine days, Laos."

"You never told me that."

"You never asked," he says, surveying the plaza. "This used to be a theater, you know."

"I do."

"The Liberty Theater—my father would take me to see John Wayne."

"You've told me."

“That’s the original marquee,” he says, pointing to the signage atop the pergola at the plaza’s edge. The sign no longer lights up, and it’s covered in extraordinary amounts of bird excrement.

“An homage,” I say.

My father steps directly in front of me, but given his geriatric stoop it does not prove to be much of an obstruction.

The crane settles into an idle, the box hovering inches above the ground. My son touches each of the box’s six glass panes, familiarizing himself with his new domain. Then he strips nude, climbs on top of the box, and enters through the box’s only door. The attendant locks the door behind him. My son waves. The crowd applauds. My son bows. The crowd applauds again, quieter this time. My father says, “Small pecker,” and when I suggest that it might be cold in the box he says, “Small is small,” and I feel a swelling and disproportionate hostility that I quell with a series of diaphragmatic nose-breaths.

The crane jerks. The box lifts. Soon, finding himself amongst the crows, my son lowers himself on all fours, palms and knees just smears against the box’s earth-facing plane. The box fogs. My son wipes furiously at the blur. In the moments of clarity between his heaving breaths, I watch his determined face recede with the box’s increasing height. Suddenly, I am overcome with an intense pride for my son, for his undertaking. I am brought to mind of the ancient rites of passage—solo expeditions into the wild, unarmed battles with rabid wolves—and begin to view my son’s emprise in these terms: a modern rite of passage, a way, in a society of pleasures, to elevate one’s self via discomfort and deprivation. I then find myself wondering about my own rites of passage, my own forged paths as a young man. I recall my eighteenth birthday, my father leading me into the den, presenting me with a suit and tie and the address of the call center where I now apparently worked; I recall my first beer, how it made me sneeze, how Malcom Downey, my alleged best friend, said *Looks like someone’s allergic to a good time* to the amusement of three human girls; I recall the all-consuming terror of Pop Warner football, the chill of the sleeveless basketball uniform; I recall my father looming behind the little league backstop whispering *If you don’t swing the damn bat*, and I recall not swinging, never swinging, just standing there as the pitches streamed by.

The crowd gasps. Sunbeams graze the box’s twirling panes in a fiery display of refraction. I step back, shade my eyes, see my son’s supporters, signs raised proudly overhead. I see my bent father battling posture to look up. The glare relents and I see my son, sky-bound, angelic, and realize that his experience in the box is an act of sacrifice on behalf of us all—the diffident fathers, the hand-forcing fathers, the hypochondriacal mothers, even the curious pack of cyclists now blocking the intersection to contemplate his bizarre bravery—and as the box settles into its final height, and I am about to return home a dignified dad, my son huffs against the glass, producing an oval of condensation in which he draws an enormous downward-facing arrow. What is this? I think. A symbol? An equation? A work of art? The

condensation evaporates, my son huffs again, this time writes *DOWN*. With that the attendant nods, pulls the crane's lever, and commences the box's descent into the plaza. My son crawls to a corner of the box, hands shielding his genitalia. The supporters lower their signs. The cyclists re-clip their metallic cleats. My father mutters, elbows past me, then jaywalks across four lanes of active traffic. And I find myself doing the same, stopping cars, dodging cyclists, doing everything in my limited power to escape that familiar specter of shame.

Teddy Engs is a writer and musician living in Portland, Oregon. His work has recently appeared in *Split Lip Magazine*, *HAD*, and *Chestnut Review*. He is an associate editor for *Pithead Chapel*. Find him on Twitter @WardoEngs.

A PLANTATION WEDDING

passagesnorth.com/passagesnorthcom/2023/2/17/a-plantation-wedding-by-brianna-johnson

February 17, 2023

A Plantation Wedding by Brianna Johnson

The ancient oaks that line the walk will be trimmed with fairy lights.

The white bride in her white dress will stand beside her white groom and smile wide with white teeth as they pose for pictures on the lawn. The photographer will tell them to hold each other. Kiss. It's the happiest day of their lives.

Bridesmaids and groomsmen will watch and applaud dressed in hoopskirts and waistcoats —pictures of the genteel south.

We will watch from the eaves.

In the kitchen, the staff of Ms. Maybelle's Soul Food + Catering Service will sweat over steaming trays of okra and yams, collards and corn bread, macaroni and cheese. Finger lickin food served on silver platters by black hands in white gloves.

The waitstaff will glare from the kitchen as guests mingle in the parlor on the refurbished hardwood floors. They will admire the craftsmanship. *These old homes were so well-built.*

Others will tour the grounds escorted by guides. They will tell them about the estate. How the fields once burst with cotton and sugarcane reached the sky.

We will listen from the soil.

The guides will take guests to the quarters, burned-black cabins with no doors and dirt floors. The guests will run their hands along the walls lined with mud and paper clippings. They will be surprised to see them still standing as if the same damn hands didn't build the manor.

The cabin will be decorated, set dressing for the show. A bed in the corner, a rocking chair, a pot in the fireplace. The guests will find it quaint, cozy.

We will watch from the corners of the room. We will remember hay and mites and cold. We will know the pot was always empty.

Inside the master's house we will watch from the walls. Watch our kin shuffle in and out again, still burdened. In the kitchen, we will wipe the sweat from our kinfolks' brows. We will marvel at the whites of their eyes. We will spit the ashes from our hollowed mouths into the

pots that simmer and hiss. We will try to force knives into our family's clenched fists and tell them to fight.

The party will move from the house to the lawn. Stomachs full, the guests will dance and drink and laugh. They will rejoice in each other and beauty of their lives. The bride will throw her bouquet. Rice and rose petals will rain down. She and her groom will ride away beneath the bowed boughs toward a shining future.

Along the tree line and woven amongst the branches, we will witness and weep.

Brianna Johnson's stories have appeared in *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *The Molotov Cocktail*, *Wigleaf*, *Kenyon Review*, *Obsidian: Literature & Arts*, *Split Lip Magazine,* and elsewhere. An alum of the Tin House Summer Workshop, she is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, O. Henry Prize nominee, and Best Small Fictions nominee with work longlisted for the Wigleaf Top 50. An MFA graduate from The University of Tampa, she teaches college English in Orlando, Florida.