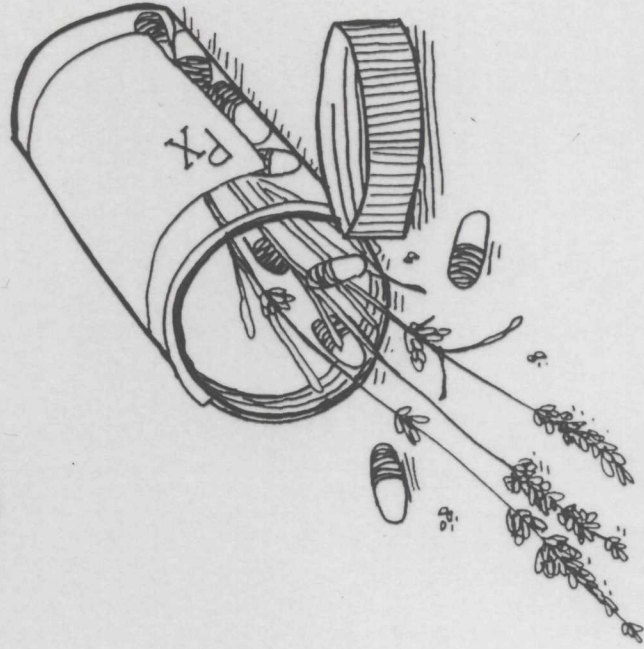


script.



2018

Incisions

william henzler

I held a rat's tumor today.
She had been suckling
the benign carcinoma for about
a trimester and had stitched the

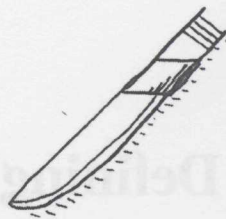
golf ball's breadth across
her own powdery breast like
a hot, sugared pastry.

Unsterile she lay, supine and skyward,
my eyes transecting a line to her incisors
as they flashed like a darting carp.

Bobbing in a lake of cooling blood, the heart
had quietly rippled its protestations.
"The way the sea is, the vein is—"
and the other students, bent

over, shredding the
sternum and snapping off
lobes of sleek liver...

I caress her tail



A

Quotation an excerpt from Beth Bachmann's *Arrow* (2016).

Innocence

emily hanson

The wind rustled the leaves on the trees and the young woman sat in her chair on the veranda peering over the fence at the two little girls playing pretend. They were on the edge of the grass, using a tree stump as a table. Clusters of mushrooms surrounded the little girls, disappearing as they were plucked from the ground by little hands. After carefully picking the biggest mushrooms and placing them on the stump, the little girls wandered to a nearby pine tree and stripped branches of their needles, bringing them to the tree stump.

Looking away, the woman glanced up at the sky. Dark clouds were coming in, minutes away from embracing the sun. The wind picked up: knocking leaves from their branches, swaying the tops of the trees, fluttering the white net around the veranda. *There will be a storm warning this evening: everyone is advised to stay inside.* But, the young woman liked storms and wanted to see the clouds come forward, hear the rolling thunder, feel the shock of lightning.

In her peripheral, the young woman witnessed the carnage of the ritual of pretend: red rose petals were torn from their stems, bushes and thorns intact. The girls threw the red petals all over the stump, spilling them over onto the ground.

The girls danced around the tree stump, scattering leaves on top of the rose petals. The young woman leaned closer, trying to hear the nearly imperceptible song that the girls started to sing.

As the clouds rolled in, all that the young woman heard was the sound of the incoming thunder: *London Bridge is falling down, falling down. London Bridge is falling down, my Fair Lady. Build it up with iron bars, iron bars. Build it up with iron bars, my fair lady.*

School Lunches

hillary le

School lunches; a topic of great pain. One cool, autumn day in first grade, my mom packed me spam, rice, and seaweed for lunch. I sat down, mouthwatering as I unzipped my bright pink linoleum lunch box. The enticing sweet and salty aroma of spam entered my nose as I opened the Tupperware lid. At the same moment, my surrounding peers lifted their fingers to their nose and began to scowl at me with disgust.

They exclaimed, "What is that smell!?" and stood up to move to another lunch table. I snapped the lid closed and sat there holding back tears. A plethora of emotions flooded me: anger, shame, sorrow. Angry at my mom for packing me this lunch, angry at my "friends" who are quick to judge, shame at my Vietnamese heritage, sorrow for always standing out. I was frozen with these thoughts and just sat there staring at the purple flower laced into my lunchbox until we were dismissed back to class.

The moment I arrived home at 2:30 PM, I set my lunchbox in front of my mother and proudly stated that I refuse to bring her food to school anymore. I gave her two options, to give me money to

buy hot lunch at school or to pack me Lunchables. She stood there, her jaw clenched, face contorted with both confusion and pain. My mom silently nodded her head and turned back to the kitchen. I also walked away my head high, feeling proud of myself.

For the rest of my elementary school career, I ate hot lunch and was never teased again.

One day a few months after this incident, my Laos friend brought rice and broiled blackfish with sautéed onions and bok choy to lunch. Upon opening her lunch box, my initial reaction was jealousy as the dish look incredibly appetizing. However, I stifled this thought and lifted my fingers to my nose. I joined in on the kids teasing her, acted disgusted and moved away from her.

I should have stood up for her; I should have been proud of my heritage and the exquisite dishes my mom made. Now that I am 21 and have moved away from home, I miss her cooking more than anything. Throughout my childhood, I repeatedly declared, "Yes I'm Asian but I'm basically white," desperately trying to convince my friends and myself that we were not different. We may have watched the same TV shows, played the same games, spoke in the same manner but as I was always different. They knew it and I knew it. Every time one of friends asked to come over, I would reply with let's go to your house, my mom doesn't like when I bring people over. My mom would constantly ask me why I never brought friends home, I didn't want to tell her that I was embarrassed. I knew that they would walk through the front door and instantly comment that it smelled funny and the décor was tacky. My mom would be standing there with her big smile and attempting to talk to my friends with her thick Vietnamese accent. They would be frozen like a deer in headlights, their eyes begging me to translate her English. I didn't want her to widen the chasm that was already present between my friends and me.

The one time I did bring a friend over, my mom offered her our family's favorite dish, *bột chiên*, rice-flour cakes fried with eggs, scalions, and drenched with sweet and sour soy sauce. My friend was hesitant, she mumbled "It looks weird..." I clamored, "No, try it! It's AMAZING!" She rose the fork to her mouth and wrapped her lips around it warily. She carefully closed her lips and spit it out instantaneously. I immediately became flushed, blurted "It's okay!" and shuffled her out of the kitchen. After that, I stopped being friends with her.