

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

Becky Bicks

And Then on Sunday

I was eating a red popsicle when she told me. It wasn't so much that I did not hear what she said as it was that I could not hear what she said. As she spoke, my brain shut down my auditory faculties because it realized the information entering my ears would eventually reach my heart. (Humans have a remarkable intrinsic ability to survive.)

When her mouth stopped moving, I stuck the popsicle in my mouth and shrugged. It was the only thing I could think of to do. And when she asked if I understood I shrugged again because I knew that I didn't understand and that I had not heard but that I did not want her to say it again.

She asked if I was okay. I nodded because I was alive and my heart was beating and I don't really know what being okay means besides being alive.

The popsicle in my mouth was excruciatingly cold and the pain felt wonderful and I was disappointed when it turned to numbness. I was thinking about whether or not I would get frostbite on my tongue and whether or not they would have to amputate it if I did, when she grabbed my hand from my side. I felt our hands stick and I looked at her and I looked down at my hand and it felt exactly like the time she grabbed my hand a year before, except that that time it was chemistry bonding us together and this time it was a sticky residue on my fingers from a popsicle that I couldn't eat fast enough.

After a moment, she said she was going to go and pulled her hand away. It was audible, her flesh leaving mine; it sounded just like ripping off a band-aid. I stuck both hands in my pockets and sucked hard on the popsicle. She said she'd see me soon.

And as she walked away, I pulled the popsicle from my mouth and set it down on the bench because its sweetness was sickening and tasted like happiness. And I thought about band-aids and ripping one off – how it hurts every time you do it, but you know you have to eventually because it's served its purpose and can't stay on forever – and how the pain is terrible but it goes away quickly and soon after you can't remember what it felt like to rip the band-aid off or even what it felt like to have the band-aid on. And I thought about pulling my hand from hers and how soon I wouldn't remember what it felt like when she walked away and someday maybe I wouldn't even remember what it felt like when she was there.

I stood to leave, and I started to feel my tongue again, which reminded me I was alive, which reminded me I was okay. And I walked away from the bench, leaving behind a small wooden stick where there'd once been a red popsicle.