

## Backwards

She woke up in a field covered with dew. The sky was air brushed an iridescent gold as the sun rose far beyond the mountains. There was only a slight wind, just enough to make the wheat swirl around her, to help differentiate it from the sky. Butterflies, bees, and birds flew high and low. She smiled at the cooling sensation as the dew droplets ran down the side of her face and felt how her clothes now adhered to the curves of her body. *Mama would never let me wear clothes like this*, she thought. The thought of Mama brought her back to the reality of where she was. She had spent all night in the field out back. She checked her watch, but then remembered that it had stopped two months ago when the tree had stopped her car. When she fell asleep and stopped her heart.

She sat up and saw where her legs now suddenly ended in stumps, uneven stumps, and the sky was now baby blue, and the wheat was now bronze. The wet bandages would have to be changed and she would have to watch her Mama try to fight back the tears, try not to look, as the skin folded back into itself. It was as if her legs had learned a new trick whereby the lower portion could contract into the upper portion, and if only she could find the release button then they would just come back out again.

Her Mama now looked at her the way people looked at wounded animals, remembering the way they once were and secretly hoping for them to sneak out one night and die somewhere quiet in the woods or a field like their last dog Chase had done two years ago. Like she had done last night. But she wasn't dead, even though there was an ant crawling on her because he mistook her for earth and was hunting for food. *Not yet, she thought, you'll have to take me in pieces.*

She wondered what had happened to her shins and feet. *They're destroyed*, the doctors had said. *But maybe I want to bury them*, she had thought but did not say out loud, her Mama had been too horrified by the thought of her dismembered daughter. Of their now dismembered house that had ramps put into it and a new bedroom and bathroom built into the ground floor so she didn't have to sleep on the couch and be carried by her brother, Mikel, up to the bathroom where her Mama would bathe her and try to fight back the tears, try not to look, as the skin folded back into itself. If only she could find the release button.

The wheelchair was behind her waiting, and behind it was the path cut out by her brother so she could escape into the field whenever she wanted. She wondered if her car was still there waiting for her too, next to the tree, the front cut off like the wheelchair, an exposed seat mounted on two wheels, a broken vehicle carrying a broken body, without any glass to protect the body, and the wheels would have to be propelled by the hands directly, not by a combusting engine with controlled fire and pumping pistons, but two hard grips and shove forward, except when turning, when only one hand would move forward and the other would hold steady, or moving backward which she wished she could do, but it was always easier to just turn around and go forward, like a turntable that

was supposed to play an entire album from beginning to end but in fact only spun it in circles.

As she raised herself into her chair, she wondered what parts of her body she would lose next. She thought of superman, Mr. Reeves reduced to the power of his breath as he tried to blow motion into his world like God into Adam. But in the end they both eventually fell and turned back into dirt, where only the ants could tell the time, unlike the turntable only spinning the wheels, unlike the Earth flying around the Moon, unlike the Sun flying around the Earth. As she pushed herself back towards the house, hand over wheel, she thought that if only she could find the release button, then she could just wake up in her own bed, on the second floor of her old life,

and laugh.