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LYN LIFSHIN

My Sister Says Doesn't Everyone Waste Their Life?

as Mother shrivels, as her kingdom reaches only to the night stand, to arranging the way her slippers point. "So full of the joy of life," someone wrote in her college yearbook, maybe why she named her second child Joy. Maybe she felt it slipping from her. My sister, blonde, the pretty one with boys giving her roses and watches now sinks back into her shell like the turtles she cages, covers windows to keep out light. She reminds me of our mother, sitting in darkness with a cigarette, waiting for my call, expecting the worst. My sister and I chose to have cats instead of children.

We feared becoming what we clawed at and bit to move away from, as if we could help keep genes hostage, howling at each other like animals caught in traps they'd gnaw their own legs off to escape.

Lyn Lifshin lives in Washington, D. C., U.S.A.

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