

**DNR**

**Maria S. Picone**

You are full of yourself, but not so full that you can't check the box. When you die, you will fulfill the orders of others. You announce it at Thanksgiving as you fill your husband's cup.

Your husband commands you to fill yourself with him, to take on his ego and eat his sins. You are his Beatrice; you will go hand-in-hand to the afterlife—except that you are a woman and you will always go under him; you will follow after him; you will come from his rib until it cracks apart like a splintered wishbone. He says the boiled carrots 'taste like home,' a place even snowier and whiter. Without spices, just as he likes. You nibble the peeled potatoes religiously, wishing for the foreign aid of curry or Sriracha.

Your parents tell you that to live on after death, you must remain a sealed, virgin corpse. Their hands tremble on the table like lily petals in a haze of baby's breath. You play worry with them like a game of chicken.

After the meal, you clear the table. You take away, and your mother with you, filling your arms with the luster of white china. You thread the dishes like pearls through the housewife assembly line. While he sits and fills himself with a procession of images: driving a sacrificial flesh towards a giant fork.

You realize now, stealing the last piece of cherry pie from the shimmering server, that you are full of yourself to give to others. But it's not the whiteness of a wedding veil, a vanilla cake, or a parley flag. It's a blank page, a vacant whiteboard—waiting for the equations, the concepts of a life.

Your sons run so fast they pass you by, and the years fulfill you. You fill your parents' graves with rainbow-aligned flowers, an outcry of abundance and life. You are not the life they conceived. You are the world and the world is you. There is no holding back, no white curtain between you and the 'unseemly'—there is only chance, collision. You hold this knowledge on your driver's license, the checked box proclaiming your difference.

You poured out his ashes into the sea.

Maria S. Picone has an MFA from Goddard College. She loves cats, noodles, and oil painting. Her fiction appears in *Monday Night Lit*, talking about strawberries all of the time, and

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