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Jennifer A. Howard

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THOUGH BOB EUBANKS IS STILL ALIVE AND KICKING

Jennifer A. Howard

When you were a kid, you and your neighbor Tracy played radio bingo for the old woman who lived in the house between you while she worked in her garden. You sat at her kitchen table with the cards, and Tracy had the phone number of the radio station memorized for the moment you'd need to call in and claim the win. After, sometimes, you'd watch *The Newlywed Game* together because there was something dirty going on that neither of you could quite figure out.

Now, twenty years later, reruns of *The Newlywed Game* make you sad. There is something about the color of the film, or the sheen of the fabrics the contestants wear, or perhaps their imperfect teeth, or the slick rouge on their cheeks that suggest that many of them are now dead. It's not a medical diagnosis, an identification of them as heavy smokers or drinkers or far too heavy to grow old. Though each one does suggest her own end. You feel breast cancer in them, and car accidents, and surprise aneurysms. Hearts giving out from incessant throwing up, suicide by pills, accidental shootings. They look like people who no longer exist, echoes of adults you might have known when you were in grade school. These couples, you realize, are only about as old as you are now. Someday, someone could look at pictures of you and see your own end, though you have no idea what tragedy they will see in you.

What makes you sadder is that, even if these contestants have been doomed in the ways you imagine, they have something you do not. Each person playing the *Newlywed Game* has a teammate, where you have gone through your life from boy to boy to boy, never being good enough to any of them that they'd want to play the game with you. You lost track of Tracy in high school, stopped playing bingo, and began identifying your signature lipstick, making out in trucks parked on dead-end roads. Even later, when your friends started getting married, you never learned how to keep any of your boyfriends around long enough

that they even had a chance to propose to you, because there was always someone else so marvelous, so attractive, and who loved you back so hard. Someone who wrote you long letters or put together music for you or drove you around to new waterfalls, who cooked you dinner. In *The Newlywed Game*, there's one question they never ask because it is too easy, because every couple would get it right, and it would not advance the game. Nobody has asked it of you yet, but you worry that someday, when you are older, when you have figured out exactly how it is that you will die, someone will. That they will ask you who was the love of your life and you won't know the answer, even though you have loved and loved.