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Nunavut

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NUNAVUT

David Yost

It was the first time I'd seen her since the hospital, and after, re-clothed, we stopped at a corner café for an hour of lattés, thumb-wrestling, and tasseomancy. We joked about the Cubs and a former classmate of ours who'd just been abandoned in Nunavut by his boyfriend, a gambling-addicted geologist, then she reached to take my hand and finally she talked about it, the Guillain-Barré, the tubes twisting in her throat and the snake-hiss of the ventilator, how her estranged plumber father loomed weepfully above her to declare he'd die in her place if that's what was needful and how it took twenty minutes with the alphabet cards to blink back *oh please* but then, chastened, *Thanks, Dad*. Then she looked me right in the eye and said, foam-lipped, I think it was because of this. Don't be silly, I said, I read the Wikipedia article, GBS isn't contagious, and she said no, I think it means I have to choose. So choose, I said, squeezing her hand, my hairy knuckles sprouting between her fingers like radishes, and she said, I'm sorry, and went home to her husband. But still, every time I walk past, I think how we tugged at each other's fingers to hear the joints pop, giggling like kids, and I think, so we had that, anyway.