

Walking the Wife

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Mother was a runaway, a drunk orphan with scrimshaw bones. She loved to blow up and dry-heave words, volcanic rocks. I hid in the closet in my room—squatting, a primitive mud statue, little Gaia after the big explosion. Mother stormed out of the house, clutching glow-in-the-dark rosary beads—each was a tiny magic ball. Dad would go to find her, sic her home and once I peered out my window to see him, barefoot in snow, trying to guide Mother back in. Dad couldn't lift her, so he half-carried her, performing a sad pas de deux under a moon with a chip on its shoulder, on an earth that sent icicles up his legs. How to be steady, how to be ready for a wife who stumbled and bumbled like a huge beast with a bullet in her head: *bang, bang*, I whispered, *bang, bang*.