**4:57 am, Saturday**

Kathryn V. Jacopi

The dog throws up in the bedroom. It smells loose. Ryan’s asleep. Cleaning would mean lights, retching, and a thumping dog’s tail. I light a candle.

*Hallelujah.* Matchhead smolders.

I don’t believe. Can’t spell the word, only know the sound, and that song, the *Shrek* one. If I write about this, I’ll have to stop. Spellcheck is useless; I’ll write nothing the AI can figure out. I’ll look for it online, its etymology, and listen to the song, many many times—different versions, all singers. A woman will be my favorite. I’ll be moved and disturbed by the lyrics.

The writer will know more than the narrator who will hear the whispers and tell the traveler. I am, splintered.

For now, it’s sound. Earbuds sing the chorus. I want to meditate, but I’m afraid. Last time, deep into it, I asked, *Can I control my heart?* Slow it down. Make it stop. I mean stop stop. My eyes opened. I knew. Called my doctor.

Not too long ago I would’ve romanticized it. Welcomed it in and put the flowers in a vase. A summer dress draped upon my waist so cartoon sexy. The bellybutton outlined in the moonlight, in the kitchen, in the chair. In my mind at least. My best accessory was a wine glass, red. I did the best. Fooled myself. Told no truths. To no one. To myself. Stopped nothing.

It doesn’t matter what I believed and believe.

The dog snores on the couch. Outside, black branches into a vein blue dawn space. I’ll write, but tomorrow I still won’t know how to spell it.