

# the HARLEQUIN

*Carrie Fountain*

## **My Father Comes to Get Me**

I've thrown up. The nurse has wrapped an icepack in a brown paper towel and I'm holding it against my forehead because that's what she told me to do. He comes right away in the clothes he wears to clean the bar, the sweat-stiff shirt he wears to mop the dancehall and stock the breathless coolers with beer, the cut-off jeans stained with tar. He comes right away and takes me into the shock-bright morning and puts me in the backseat and tells me to tell him if I feel like I'm going to throw up again. And then I go with him to do his life at eleven o'clock. At the Cash-n-Carry the man asks, That your girl, Albert? I have recovered enough to go in. How have I never been in this place before? Everything dusty, dimly lit, a man's place, a place for men. My father, standing in front of the enormous jars of maraschino cherries, takes one, then another, then, amazingly, another into his arms. That's her, he says.

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