

BLACKACKLE: Flash Fiction by R.S. Powers

written by Guest Contributor | September 22, 2021



The Four Worst Paint Names We Came Across At Home Depot Upon Failing To Pick A New Color For The Empty Spare Room

Pompeii Ruins (dark gray)

A week prior, my fiancé miscarried at four months. We were at the county library for a poetry reading. An adjunct colleague of my fiancé told the small gathering that her new chapbook concerned failing to learn to cook Cajun food along with what she characterized as “small beer” coitus. During a villanelle somewhat indirectly about anal sex, I thought my fiancé, wearing a loose dark dress, had wet herself. She stood and we saw the puddle of bright blood on her orange folding chair. We were shuffling to my car when my fiancé told me: Don’t bother speeding.

NYPD (blue gray)

When the young male doctor explained what a D&C would entail, my fiancé mock-nonchalantly waved away his entire presence: Oh honey, I’ve been through much more stressful things than this. She wanted us to laugh with her at least a little, so we did. Walking the fluorescent hallways to the waiting area, I found myself thinking: Sixteen weeks. Size of an avocado. A few weeks from learning the sex. We’d been joking about a gender reveal that would make the news. A few days prior, we were up before dawn googling how to make massive rainbow-colored explosions.

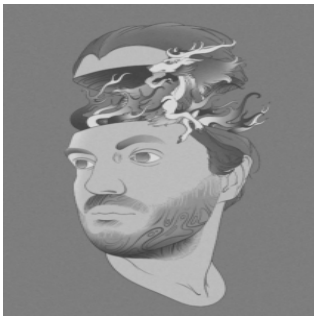
Climate Change (off-white green tint)

The day after the hospital—on a warm and windy December afternoon—we went walking along the warping paved path through the towering dying wood. We found a sprawling playground with an anarchy of squealing children navigating aging metal equipment, their dozens of sunlit shadows racing on the red mulch. Again, I told her to cancel her next week of classes. We’d drive to the beach, hit the casinos. We’d hike the mountains, wear nothing but sneakers. We’d break into the abandoned IRS building, take photos of the sunset through the broken walls. It’s okay to not feel anything, my fiancé had to tell me. We’ll never ever know what we’ve lost.

Baby’s Breath (off-white gray tint)

After we learned, I became lost in a joy that defies language. I rushed to tell our surviving parents and friends, spent days composing our social media post. After we emptied the spare room and tore up the carpet, the floorboards daily shone. The room's up on the second floor, two big paneless windows looking out onto cracked concrete. That room is where my fiancé writes all her poetry. What else can be said?

Image Credit: Edvard Munch, *The Rainbow* (1898)



R.S. Powers's stories and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Glimmer Train*, *Grist*, *Sou'wester*, *Speculative Nonfiction*, *X-R-A-Y*, *World Literature Today*, *The Hunger*, and other journals. He is currently a PhD candidate in creative writing at Florida State University.