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Yellow Helmet

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Yellow Helmet

Cover Page Footnote

This piece was created during the workshop as a writing exercise in 19W. The prompt for this exercise: to write a short form piece inspired by a chosen image.

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Elisabeth Baumann

Harriet hurries inside and shuts the door quickly behind her. You look up from your phone, pausing mid-crunch of your cereal, and blink at her. You can't ask what's up-- the cereal-- but you hope your energetic eyebrows convey what you're thinking.

"*It's back,*" Harriet hisses and turns to deadbolt the door.

You swallow without chewing and cough. "What? Really?"

"Would I joke about this?" Harriet runs over to the windows and shuts the blinds, and you follow her to peer through them. She's right, there it is. Innocuous on it's side, almost blending in with the winter-beaten grass.

"We have to call someone," you tell her, as you said on Wednesday, when it showed up at Starbucks, and on Christmas, when she unwrapped a box you could've sworn you'd put under the tree and it was just-- there.

"Call who?" Harriet asks and then darts her eyes at you when you open your mouth to say His name. "Even if I did call him," she says, and it's an improvement that she used "him" instead of "that," "what would I even say?"

"You tell him that it's back and it's worse this time," you tell her, and look back outside to make sure it's still there. The only thing worse than it appearing is it's even more frequent disappearances. At least when it's watching them they know where it is.

"But then he's going to bring everything else with him," Harriet says. You look back at her and her shoulders have slid down, the tenseness of her anger giving way to the resignation.

"I'm sorry," you tell her, and you nearly mean it seeing the dejection on her face.

She sighs and turns. "No you're not," she says, as she reaches for the phone. "You've been waiting for this for months."

You wait until she leaves the room to grin. Quickly, you turn back to check on the helmet and-- yes. Your grin widens. It's gone.

Samantha Locke

When Abigail, my niece, was little, she would ride around the neighborhood in a white bicycle with pink ribbons sprouting from the handle. They would flap as she learned and one of them, a purple on the right side, was torn, ruined from a particularly unpleasant encounter with a blackberry bush. As she got older she went on longer rides- still, never too far, and it was always a joy to see her smiling face, red from the journey as she re-entered the house.

My sister found her far less pleasant and would sigh just a little, wringing her hands and muttering at the girl as she checked the clock above the mantelpiece or the darkening twilight.

Sometimes she would scold Abigail and sometimes she would not.

And while I could tell my sister, Margaret, did care about Abigail I saw t Abigail did not see the worry for the care that it was and would tromp, slightly deflated, to her room at the end of the hall.

I think I am far more qualified than anyone to complain or criticize my sister (and I am saying this before you bring it up) because I know how her mind works and I happen to know her better than anyone else. I knew her when we moved out of West Sac and away from Arden Park

and I was the only one she wrote to when she moved to Los Angeles to become a musician. And the one to greet her when she returned, tail between her legs, a year later.

And this is hardly about Abigail, and I don't want you to think it is, it's just that I thought of her as I was walking along one morning.

I do this sometimes. I tell myself, "I am going to see my sister. That is what good sisters do: they check up on one another." and then I turn around and walk the other direction, because I know that will not happen. And I hardly ever think of my sister, or her husband John, except this morning I saw a helmet just like Abigail's on the corner of the road.

I should go check on Margaret- that is what good sisters do.

I probably won't.