

Fall 12-1-2018

## Origami

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### Recommended Citation

Crawford, Ronda (2018) "Origami," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 1 , Article 25.  
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol41/iss1/25>

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When my father left my mother, she became smoldering paper. She didn't fold, spindle or mutilate herself. She didn't crumble up into a ball and throw herself away. Instead she became inanimate, flat, two-dimensional, with charred edges, silent and always smoking. She could interface with things, pots that cooked meals, dishes that needed washing, hair that need to be braided, she only conversed with our cat Dog, and she always had a lit cigarette. She became afraid she would be swept away by a strong wind, or damaged in some way by the wetter elements, or perhaps yellowed prematurely in the sun, so she rarely left the house. She would stare wistfully at the television, or out a window for hours at a time, or listening to music. Even then I recognized the way my mother waited for the familiar sounds of keys, and then footsteps, a heavy voice that would call out and ask for something, food, water, the mail, anything as a greeting. She was waiting for my father to come home.

For a while my mother could change shape and form and will herself to become various things, mother, daughter, separated wife, and magically never showing where a previous crease or fold had been. She did emotions as well, laughing at jokes, angry that something that couldn't easily be replaced had gotten broken, she hugged and smelled of Youth Dew... for awhile at least. Then one day in the middle of the night she made a shape, so complicated with so many angles, and tight corners, that she could barely move. Anna with the laughing eyes, suspended animation and became her final self, ornamental, and fragile.



*Homestead*  
Susan Trestrail

My father became the rock star, a legend in his own time, a hero of the footlights, making exclusive one-night-only appearances. My father didn't play an instrument he played people, and my mother and I became his biggest fans. Our admiration of his artistry was second only to the virtuosity of his bullshit.

When my father came to town on his hit-and-run tour you had only a 24-hour window to confirm your seat, and even though the show was usually delayed by hours, or might be canceled with a moments notice, our enthusiasm never wavered. "I want to run through" he would say, and my mother became transformed, animated and whole. We would talk about styling and stage setting, rehearsing our lines so that there were no missed opportunities. We would be the best audience ever, engaged, laughing on cue, and we knew that if we applauded and cheered loud enough long enough, we might get an encore. And that would lead to repeat performances, and that could lead to an extended run with an indefinite end, if we could only show enough appreciation.

My mother was a naturally good looking woman, and when she tried, which she only did for my father, she was drop dead gorgeous. But my father was a classic beauty, too pretty to be just handsome, a fact he had been reminded of every day of his life by most women he met. And, if that didn't do it for you, he was charming, in a way you only see in black and white movies. He was ready with a light for a cigarette, a lozenge for a cough, or a soft white linen handkerchief you could keep to catch tears.

My grandmother called him "Slick," the last of the great door openers. But she never smiled when she said it. And she always said it as if were one name, Slick-the-last-of-the-great-door openers. The sound would be in a different font, with hyphens, italics, letters so small, and delicate you almost missed them. Almost.

I sat, most times unnoticed on the broken step-ladder in the kitchen next to the stove. Facing the light from the old black and white portable television with the wire coat hanger for an antenna, the one you had to change the channel with a pair of pliers because the knob had broken off. I watched everyone unfold around me, with my eyes shut tight, seeing everything play out, and hating all of it, while loving each and every one of them. I was 10.

RONDA CRAWFORD