

KAT GONSO

Daniel

Baking with Grandma: 1999

Grandmother and I filled the kitchen with Christmas cookies: molasses, chocolate chip peanut butter, Hungarian pecan, thick butter cutouts in the shape of hearts and stars and dinosaurs. Red and green sprinkles dotted the orange tile. Sifted flour speckled our noses and cheeks. When we ran out of table space, we lined tins with cookies and placed them on the porch. Hundreds of cookies. Grandma washed the spatulas and bowls, staring out the window toward the garage where Grandpa was woodworking, the roar of the buzz saw. I perched on a baby blue stool to Grandma's left and read aloud. Thirty minutes of reading equaled one point. Ten points earned a free book from Scholastic. My voice shifted, deepened, slowed as I morphed into a hairy troll. Together, my grandmother and I visited faraway lands. We did not speak about why we baked. About Mom wedded to a hospital bed, Dad clutching her hand as she gave birth to my brother who I knew would not live long enough to meet me. We knew the odds were not in our favor. We baked and we read and we did not speak about why, because everyone agreed I was too young to know.

Time Traveling Dinosaur Party: 2015

My father is turning fifty-five and throwing himself a Time Travel Back to the Dinosaurs Party, which seems out of character for an office manager at a water company who doesn't like to travel to the East Side of Cleveland, let alone time travel, but when I ask my mom if it's a joke she replies, "No, he's just losing his mind. I'm worried about dementia." I tell her he's too young and she says, I know.

My younger sister Lucy and I fly home for the party. We wear party hats with purple T-Rexes and swing batons at a papier-mâché brontosaurus filled with Starbursts. We crawl into the cardboard time machine Dad built out of boxes he stole from the Mayfield water warehouse. We listen as he rattles off facts about dinosaurs. *The word dinosaur is derived from the Greek language and means 'terrible lizard.' Female dinosaurs laid anywhere between three to twenty oblong eggs per sitting.* We worry about his new obsession, about how he misplaces

his glasses and gets lost driving home from work. Surely, he is not so old.

I ask him: Why back to the dinosaurs? Why not spring back and stop the Columbine shooting or relive the day you met mom in that bar on East 130th? As he eats a slice of vanilla cake with green frosting, he asks if I recall my brother. *Do I remember Daniel?* I do not know how to answer. Before he climbs into the time machine he pulls us aside and says, “Good-bye, my children. It’s been an honor,” as if those taped-up boxes slathered in black and yellow paint are gonna take him somewhere, back, away from here, away from us.

Kat Gonso’s stories have been published in *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Gravel*, *Corium*, *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*, and various other journals and anthologies. She won the 2017 Gover Flash Fiction Prize and is featured in *Best New Writing*. Kat teaches writing in Boston.