

ALLISON WEISSMAN

MENDING

We heard it before it came. Over the mountaintops, the clouds rolled in thick and silvery like steel wool, while I watched from the kitchen, wide-eyed and still, hands pressed to the sliding glass door. My mother was, at first, anxious, checking the weather app, whispering to herself, “No, no, no!” But when she saw that animated cloud, the rain, and the bright yellow zigzag, her face drained like a fever.

On the shed below, the asphalt shingles had begun to peel up like scabs. From above, the roof looked like it had been torn and chewed away by termites or dark, flesh-eating bacteria. We couldn’t afford repairs, so to mend the holes, my mother purchased a fifty-foot tarp from Walmart. I was twenty-two, working from home; I saw the damage and knew this crinkly shell wasn’t going to cut it.

My older brother Brian had agreed, begrudgingly, to help my mother nail down the tarp. But in the cloudless days leading up to the storm, each time she asked, he gave a series of excuses: selling life insurance for his MLM, practicing drums for his thrash metal band, Mindrazer. He’d have said anything to avoid crawling around up there, over the decay.

In the kitchen, my mother looked from her phone to the clouds, back to me again. Then, fiercely, she called my brother’s name while I stood there — icy floor tile seeping through the socked soles of my feet — watching her voice tear out. I’d seen her yell like this before. Our whole life, really, had been one long crying out. But I hadn’t seen her this angry since she found out I was nonbinary a year before. Her face was flooding that same shade of