

## Gas Light

*By Krista Carson*

My bias-cut dress was absinthian, the back just low enough. I'd last worn it ages ago - the wedding of a couple now long divorced. My youngest insisted on formal attire for her tea party. *Voilà*.

I thought about changing as I wiped sticky drips from the floor. But the dress felt so fine. It still fit the same, though now the silk caught on stubble on my unshaven legs. Pausing, worlds away, I touched the marvelous fabric.

I nudged couch cushions with a knee, then smeared thick, white sunscreen on a little face while making a mental note of the sunscreen's expiration date. Laundry was strewn around the living room like litter. I felt like a ghost - listless, wispy. There, but not. The angry hum of a migraine - or a panic attack - approached.

I grabbed my purse from the banister. My feet, seemingly of their own accord, stepped into flip-flops. Out the front door I went. My mini-van was oven-like from the August sun; the leather seared my bare back.

My wild sobs masked the buzzing in my ears as I looped around the highway merge lane. Eastward, aimless, fast.

I rage screamed. Then again until my throat hurt from it. I had nowhere to go but every intention to keep going.

Through tear-blurred sight, something caught my attention. The dashboard. A light - the gas light.

No.

Fuck.

I laughed something unrecognizable. A sign with the price of gas whizzed by. The only thing I could think to do. Such banality!

My juice-tea- and tear-stained dress clung, sweat-wet in unfortunate places. I pumped gas and headed home.

Three children ran circles around me as I lay unmoving, still gowned, on the cold kitchen floor.

'Is Mommy dead?' asked one.

I wondered too.

'She's fine,' said my husband.

To cite:

Carson, K. (2024). Gas Light. *Journal of Psychology, Gender, and Trauma*, 2, CR3-4.

Bio: Krista Carson (she/her) is a Creative Writing PhD student at the University of Gloucestershire, UK, where she is researching the relationship between walking and creativity. Her research interests include creative and critical methodologies, including autoethnography and walking methods. She mainly writes fiction, narrative nonfiction, and poetry, often exploring nature/culture themes.