

~ Short-Short Fiction ~

**Sarah Coury**  
*Kathleen Maria*

*I named her Kathleen Maria, my little white pod. Small as a cat's eye, she had come months too soon. She was born in a cinema restroom, as next door Neo handed Agent Smith his own ass on a platter, and the crowd's many faces glowed in the affirmation: Goodness is the strongest force, it's just that simple.*

Kathleen Maria lit a fire from my ribs to my knees. She came like some holy cocoon on the tip of a spear, pale as a pearl in a scarlet puddle, a soul who would float in potential forever. A tiny vibrating beauty.

My purse contained an art nouveau matchbox which had been with me for years. Engraved on its top, a young stag turned his head away slightly, as a torrent of grapevines and lilies offered him up. I dumped out the matches and put Kathleen Maria inside.

My incredulous date drove me home. I threw my clothes away and slept for fourteen hours.

I walked in the dawn, the town sleeping shyly, to bury my box of this vague beloved stranger. Drowsy fingers felt around for my back pocket flask, a comfort motion which even the sweet chattering of maternity had never discouraged.

I reached the banks of Lake Superior, clear and cold and haunting as liquid moons, and walked inside. When the water reached my chest I swam, swam to water deep enough to hide a shipwreck. My matchbox, my Kathleen and I together slid beneath the waves. Here lay all quietude which had seeped out of the land; the very idea of death and rebirth could have sprung from this place. I imagined I heard you begin to stir, begin to hum within your dainty vessel. It tumbled from my hand like an acrobat toward deeper silent sands. A slender stag in a tangle of flora guards you, turning his head for eternity toward you.

I walked home with daylight growing in my eyes, motors and murmurs and charity bells wakening. Along the road, the birches swayed like a thousand happy hags above, using words I could not discern to propel me down their blazing trail. I will continue mining pardon's breast from a paralyzed state of lilies, from a suitcase full of vodka, from the singing wrens, that I may be some subtle design of mother to you yet. Perhaps you might be held among the particles of air, in the moments of a dream when one could swear "I've known this girl before..."

And though I cannot see the form which I describe, I know that it is shining. In a sun which is elsewhere.