

Whatever her idea of *safe* was, I felt I could be sure that it wasn't me lying on the paper in the bed and folding her heart in half without even knowing. I wasn't sure where to leave it, so I tucked it into the covers with its top poking out as if it were a tiny person waiting, all snug, and I got out of there. I left the night-light on for it.

You can do it, I thought to the unknown lady friend. It's going to be different this time. Be strong and prevail. Please, somebody. It doesn't have to be me. I folded the top of the blanket down to reveal more of a sliver of the note so it wouldn't be missed.

There was nothing else for me to do there; I had run out of ideas. I put my clothes back on, and I looked the whole house over, making sure I had left no piece of myself behind. It looked exactly as it had when I arrived. Good. I closed the door and locked it, hid the key where it should be hidden. I could hear the freeway in the distance, and the moon hung low over the fence. The yard was barren. Like I said . . . who should water it? No one would do that under the circumstances. It was understandable. A matter of priorities. People are different, and I respect that.

I stood there for a minute thinking of it all. There was no way to change anything. I hoped Graham had been able to make some sense of it. The baby would've been thirteen years and two months old by now.

Photographer **Laura Heffington**'s writing has been published in *Fifth Wednesday Journal* and *Chicago Quarterly Review*. Born in Los Angeles, California, she lives there now. Her photo book, *Architectural Tour and Elements of Design*, is available through Big Cartel.

KATHRYN MAYO

Victor and Ruth Shaw, Both 58, 2017

Wet collodion ambrotype, 11 X 14 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST